

MILITARY INTERVENTION AND CIVILIAN
REACTION IN CHILE, 1924-1936

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PREFACE

The problem of militarism has been increasingly studied during the past few years, and as world tensions mount, will continue to receive the attention of scholars. Latin America has usually been pictured as one area where military influence permeates many facets of national life. Many people believe that Latin American history is nothing but a story of recurrent military coups. In some areas the military has constantly left its normal role in order to enter into others, but it is a mistake to generalize for the entire continent. Chile is one notable exception, since the military has generally remained out of politics. Chile's long tradition of civilian government was interrupted by the Revolution of 1891 and during the 1924-1932 period, and even then the military intervened not to benefit itself alone, but in an attempt to solve vital national problems.

The period from 1924-1932 was one of those times when the military felt it was necessary to enter into the political scene. Arturo Alessandri's government toppled and fell, as a result. From September, 1924, until October, 1932, Chileans witnessed a series of governments, none of which lasted for its legal term. Abruptly in 1932, however, with the election of Alessandri to the presidency for a

second time, the situation changed. The military returned to its labors and promised to remain out of politics. Part of the answer for this sudden change in attitude was due to the influence of officers who wanted to return the administration of the nation to the civilians and to return the military to its rightful duties. The civilians themselves, furthermore, provided an answer as they organized and threatened the military with retaliation if it intervened again. The Republican Militia, the civilian organization, was hence an answer formulated by the civilians to stop illegal military coups.

Alexandri supported and aided the militia because of the uncertainty of the military's loyalty. Even though the militia was never called on to protect the constitutional government, there was little doubt that its presence was enough to cause the plotters to pause before they attempted to organize a coup. In this manner the militia played an important role in recent Chilean history, for it aided in re-establishing tranquility and law to a country that had been ravaged by eight years of political unrest.

This study does not attempt to analyze completely the military intervention into Chilean political life. That is a subject for a later work. Instead this study is primarily concerned with the civilian reaction to the military intervention, and more specifically, the Republican Militia. The major drawback to a study of this nature is the lack of material either in Spanish or English on Latin American

militarism. This study, therefore, is hoped to be the first in a series on the subject of the military and its role in Latin American history.

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CHAPTER I

THE REVOLUTION OF 1924

In retrospect the period of Chilean history from 1920-1924 could best be termed a power vacuum, a situation ripe for exploitation by a well-organized and disciplined group. In 1924 the armed forces were able to take advantage of the situation and wield political power. It was a strange role for the Chilean military, but the action was based on certain qualifications they alone held. The political parties which could usually qualify as the most powerful national force, had lost their claims. They were grouped into two coalitions, the Unión Nacional and the Liberal Alliance; but no single one party could operate outside the coalition and amass any widespread support. The Conservatives, Liberals, and Radicals were the largest parties, but separately did not constitute a majority. Ideologically, there was little uniformity of opinion in either of the political coalitions. The church-state question, differences over economic thought and personal conflicts kept factional disputes alive, at times nearly splitting the coalitions, and always hindering them. The armed forces were not plagued by these doctrinal debates. It was evident that none of the political parties could provide a firm foundation for

constructing a stable government. The Unión Nacional was probably the best disciplined, but the character of Alessandri's government eliminated any cooperation from the coalition.

The training of the armed forces, furthermore, inadvertently prepared them to act as an independent political force. German officers had been engaged by the government to instruct the Chilean officers as early as 1886. The first of the Germans to arrive was General Körner.¹ Under his direction, as head of the Estado Mayor General, and with the aid of other German officers the Chilean Army was reorganized completely along German lines. Modern armaments were introduced, standards raised, and over-all instruction improved. A similar reorganization, directed by English officials, took place in the navy. The rest of the country, however, was not modernizing itself at the pace of the military, and the government remained as ineffective as it had been in 1900.

Outwardly, the country appeared tranquil, but it was only a thin facade which concealed a rotten structure. Parliament virtually ran the country, the presidents being more pawns for the deputies and senators. The situation appeared to many to be the ultimate development in democracy, but the parties which maintained a stranglehold on parliament were the right-wing, reactionary groups. They ruled Chile as a

¹Arturo Ahumada, El ejército y la revolución del 5 de septiembre de 1924. Reminiscencias (Santiago: Imprenta La tracción, 1931), p. 2.

private economic and social preserve, ignoring demands for reforms from the middle and lower classes. The army, unlike the government, became especially cognizant of world intellectual, social, and economic developments and of Chile's backwardness in these areas. Officers were sent to Germany to study, and were introduced to the militarism of pre-World War I Germany. They saw a country proud and wealthy. The contrast between Germany and Chile was striking. Upon returning to Chile these officers told of Europe and especially of Germany. The desire to modernize Chile was strengthened and fostered by the reports of the German-trained officers.

The primary consideration which foretold military action was the series of long-standing grievances of the army. Reorganization of the army by the German advisers was thorough; but the "old guard" of the army was, at times, opposed to the innovations. The government had given a free rein to the advisers, and the older officers could do little but complain and delay. This temporizing caused resentment among the young officers, who felt that the reforms could best be carried out by the men trained in the new ideas, in other words, themselves. This meant an efficient promotional system which would give opportunities to these specialists to advance if not rapidly, at least regularly. Congress ignored the problem. The young officers, being increasingly frustrated at the action of some of the high commanders, met secretly in 1907. A bill to reform the promotional system

was pending in Congress; and the assembled officers, all lieutenants or captains, decided on a public display of unity in hopes that it would generate enough pressure to force the congressmen to act. They met at a restaurant on Santa Lucia during the hour of tea. The restaurant was one of the places where socially prominent people gathered, and thus important people saw their tables filled with young officers. They lodged complaints, but the high command of the army could do nothing as the meeting was purely unofficial and did not violate regulations. No speeches or manifestoes were given. The result of the silent protest, however, was the passage of the desired legislation.²

Reorganization and modernization of the army thus did not entirely rest on the good offices of the German advisers. Parallel legislation was necessary from Congress. Increases in pay and appropriations were desired, but Congress did not oblige. After World War I and the subsequent economic depression it was especially evident that some adjustment in military pay and pensions was needed. Being on fixed incomes, the officers of the armed forces were hit by the rising cost of living and the devaluation of the currency. Congress remained deaf to the pleas of the military as well as to petitions from other public employees. In 1919 conditions

²Raul Aldunate Phillips, "La revolución de los tenientes," Zig-Zag, LIII (August 17, 1957), 20-21. (Serialized article appearing in the weekly magazine Zig-Zag in the issues of August 3, 10, 17, 24, 31, 1957; September 7, 14, 21, 28, 1957; October 5, 12, 19, 26, 1957; November 16, 23, 1957.)

came to a head with the discovery of a plot. A group of officers had met and discussed the political and economic situation. On May 10 the newspapers heard of the meetings and headlined the news, calling it a plot to overthrow the government.³ The officers involved denied that they had had any such intent, saying their only purpose was to organize in order to offer President Juan Sanfuentes their united aid. The Minister of War, nevertheless, moved quickly, retiring some officers and sending others to outlying commands. The newspapers flamed the rumors, printing a constitution proposed by the group. Reportedly, the organization was to foster the formation of a republican government with a strong executive. Incriminations flew and rumors circulated that Alessandri and other Alliance politicians were involved. The Conservatives quickly demanded heads, and numerous army officers lost their commissions.⁴

The premature movement had been nipped in the bud, but the treatment given to the leaders of the group caused resentment in the army. The organization, if it was ever that, was not revolutionary and did not merit the punishment given it; but, political considerations called for action, and the Conservatives headed the investigation. The house-cleaning of the army appeared to affect members of known

³Enrique Monreal, Historia completa y documentada del período revolucionario, 1924-1925 (n. p., n. d.), p. 35.

⁴Ibid., pp. 35-36.

liberal ideas and Masons, at times ignoring those really involved in the plot.⁵

The results were unsatisfactory to everyone, especially to the army. By 1919 the officers trained in Germany or graduates of the reformed military schools of Chile had advanced into the lower echelons of the high ranks. They generally sympathized with a reform movement primarily because they were more directly affected by the economic depression and the inaction of Congress. The government, however, failed to realize the explosive conditions that were brewing. It reasoned that the army had never intervened in politics and accordingly would not do so now.

The electoral campaign of 1920 followed shortly on the heels of the frustrated military plot. The passions of the campaign were bound to affect the army. Alessanari personified the aspirations of many: the middle class, labor, army, and anti-church groups. The election was thus important for all as it represented a chance, an escape, a break from the years of government inertia. His political speeches found sympathizers in the army, especially among the young officers. With Alessanari's victory popular aspirations apparently had been vindicated.

Sanfuentes was only biding his time until he could leave the Moneda when on July 14, 1920, the situation was suddenly changed with the decree of mobilization. The

⁵Las Ultimas Noticias, May 24, 1919, p. 1.

reason prompting the decree was a familiar one, but this time the situation appeared more serious.

Since the end of the War of the Pacific, Chile's relations with her two northern neighbors had never been cordial. Peru and Chile were still squabbling over the unsettled Tacna-Arica question. Bolivia, while officially recognizing Chilean ownership of the province of Antofagasta, cried for the return of a seaport. Lack of an exact boundary delineation also kept Bolivia from settling her differences with Chile. At the end of World War I Peru and Bolivia had again demanded revindication, calling their lost provinces the Alsace-Lorraine of South America. The Chilean Army periodically had had to take positions along the disputed borders, for rumors had circulated at various times that an invasion was imminent. At other times the army had to occupy border positions in order to prevent an influx of refugees from the numerous Peruvian and Bolivian revolutions. In 1920 the situation had calmed somewhat due to the mildness of President Gutierrez Guerra, of Bolivia, who had been willing to negotiate the outstanding differences. A revolution, however, reportedly financed by Peru, succeeded in installing Juan Bautista Saavedra, who had previously been a member of the Peruvian Army. Bautista was the chief of the Republican party, whose platform was based on union with Peru to regain the lost provinces. At the same time the Bolivian Army was being reorganized under German supervision, and Peru had contracted for a French military mission. All these incidents

succeeded in prompting Chilean mobilization in July, 1920.⁶

The country had been seriously divided in the presidential election, but before the threat of possible war factional differences were quickly buried. An army of 20,000 men was raised and stationed on the northern frontier. War did not come. Before the inactivity, the political unity crumbled and on the home front rumors circulated which reported that mobilization was decreed only for political purposes. The war was called the "war of Don Ladislao," after the Minister of War, Ladislao Errázuriz, and was said to be only a move to distract the public and to reinforce commands of the North with partisans of Luis Barros Borgoño, the defeated candidate. At the same time members of the army saw conditions in the northern provinces and heard the propaganda of the radical agitators. The North was the center of Alessandri's support, and the papers were avid propagandists of the liberal cause. These papers also spread the story that the war was only a Conservative plot. Incidents soon began, and Alessandri chose this moment to visit the area. His arrival produced popular demonstrations. A reception was given for him at which he lamented the sufferings caused to the chiefs, officers, and troops of the army because of the "political maneuver." He said it really was only an attempt to deprive him of his legitimate triumph. Because of Alessandri's oratorical ability, the response to his remarks was

⁶Aldunate (August 3, 1957), 19-22.

electrifying. It was reported that afterwards he promised advancements to military men known to have favored his candidacy.⁷ The war scare passed, however, and Alessandri took office on December 23, 1920. The army returned to Santiago, but it was a different army for it had been politically aroused.

The grievances of the military were still unmet in 1920. The army made the same demands as before: readjustments in pay, a more comprehensive pension plan, and reform of the promotional regulations. Alessandri sympathized with these demands, but the Senate held up the bills and refused to act. Even though the liberal candidate had won, the long-standing aspirations of the armed forces were no closer to realization. A mere political change in presidents was apparently not enough. In some circles discussion of a more thorough change began, a change in political system and a subsequent destruction of the parliamentary strangle-hold on the government.

Alessandri, upon assuming the presidency, returned to duty many of the army officers who had been involved in the 1919 conspiracy. The action only caused discontent, for those not involved in the 1919 incident called Alessandri's action a blow to discipline, while others feared that their own promotions would be delayed. The dissent came generally from those officers opposed to Alessandri, who did not yet represent a majority opinion.

⁷Aldunate (August 10, 1957), 20-22.

Discontent increased, however, ably fanned by the opposition. In the North an unfortunate incident occurred which served to discredit the government and, to a lesser extent, the army. In the nitrate fields unemployment was widespread. Luis Emilio Recabarren, a Chilean revolutionary agitator, had a large following in the area. At one of his meetings violence broke out. A small picket of carabineros and soldiers were in Antofagasta, assigned to keep order. In some manner one of the listeners of Recabarren decided to begin the revolution single-handedly, and in the confusion the chief of the garrison, Lieutenant Argandana, was killed. His body was mutilated and the other soldiers were forced to take refuge from the mob. The next day reinforcements came and used machine guns to scatter the mob, killing 130 workers. It turned out that this action was taken without the knowledge of Alessandri. He hurriedly sent a message which urged calm.⁸ The damage had been done, however, and explanations were too late. Both the government and the army lost prestige.

During the third year of the Alessandri administration the country experienced ever worsening conditions. Congress, combating the president and his ministry relentlessly, blamed the appalling situation on the government. Alessandri, frustrated in his program for nearly three years, could not remain silent. He decided to take decisive steps.

⁸Aldunate (August 24, 1957), 20-22.

Leaving the relative safety of his presidential pedestal to re-enter directly the political arena, he virtually declared war on Congress. The reasons were obvious. By the end of 1922 he faced a bleak future. Economically, conditions had worsened and proposals to better the situation were hopelessly bottled up by Congress. For example, the peso, worth 12 pennies in 1920, had fallen to 0.5 in 1923.⁹ Hence, it was a time for action, and Alessandri proposed to use his personal prestige to secure passage of legislation which would alleviate the critical situation.

Evidence that Alessandri intended to use his power to achieve his program was the by-election controversy of December, 1923. The senator for Ñuble, José Pedro Alessandri, had died and the Senate informed the President that the election to fill the vacancy would be scheduled for January, 1924. Alessandri, however, interpreted this announcement as a violation of the Constitution, and announced that there would be no election. He accordingly left for the South, officially to attend an exposition in Osorno, but unofficially to carry the war against the Unión Nacional to the provinces. The Senate answered by censuring the cabinet and announced that it would not pass any bill that could be construed as signifying a vote of confidence for the

⁹Carlos Sáez Morales, Recuerdos de un soldado, Vol. I: El ejército y la política (Santiago: Editorial Arcilla, 1934), p. 59.

government as long as the senate vacancy problem was not resolved.¹⁰

Alessandri campaigned against the Unión Nacional, calling for elections which would give a majority to his partisans. These words found a wide range of support and a huge welcoming throng greeted Alessandri upon his return from the South. The Senate remained adamant, and on December 31 the situation reached another low point. The laws to fix the size of the armed forces and to authorize their remaining in Santiago had not been passed. The Senate would not approve these laws until a cabinet was formed which gave electoral guarantees to the Unión Nacional. Alessandri would not be pushed. On December 31 he went to a luncheon in the School of Cavalry and spoke. As later events proved, his words spelled the end for the congressional forces. He announced that the troops would abandon Santiago until the Senate approved the necessary laws. He continued, "I am going to take the opportunity also to say some words about the historic moment that the Republic is facing."¹¹ He followed this introduction by announcing a series of financial, constitutional, and social reforms he felt were necessary. Alessandri's reform program was not new, but the fact that he had discussed it in a military meeting drew response from political circles.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 60.

¹¹Ibid., p. 62.

For the first time in a military enclosure resounded a type of political address pronounced by a man such as Alessandri, who knew how to excite the souls of his audience. The officers were not going to forget afterwards that if the circumstances so demanded, they could impose the saving solution on one of the branches of the government. So had said the President of the republic to them. No one would be able to say today in what sense the officers understood this insinuation.¹²

Alessandri maintained his unrelenting campaign against Congress. The troops left Santiago and the public feared for the maintenance of order. January 5, 1924, the government announced the adjournment of Congress with the budget still unapproved. Some politicians were still trying to arrange a compromise between Alessandri and Congress, however. The government, prompted by these men, offered to give guarantees for a fair election in March if Congress would agree to pass the reform measures. Congress agreed, and the impasse was momentarily solved. Alessandri's program was not entirely enacted but some of the immediate curative measures were passed.

The peace was only momentary because in May, 1924, the parliamentary elections were held. For both camps these elections were a matter of life or death. The campaign was bitter and it boiled down to a battle between the cohecho, or electoral interference, and money of the Conservatives versus the influence and personal magnetism of Alessandri.

The election gave a victory to Alessandri and the Liberal Alliance. The right, however, released a barrage of

¹²Ibid., p. 63.

charges against the government. The Alliance had won, they said, because of direct interference by government officials. At the polling places the government had appointed members of the armed forces to keep order and to keep cohecho at a minimum. The right claimed these men were sent by Alessandri to intervene directly in the election to insure a victory for the Alliance. A Senator said in Congress, "The officers who received commissions for the election of March 2, carried in their pockets the order of intervention."¹³

The charges caused general indignation against the government, and consequently against the armed forces. Proof of intervention was requested from the Unión Nacional, and General Brieba, Minister of War, instituted an investigation of the accusations. He found that the charges were not generally valid.¹⁴ But, the smear tactics used by the right had damaged the prestige of the government. The calm which Alessandri hoped would come after the election failed to materialize. Congress, both branches controlled by Alliance majorities, was beset by internal squabbling. Electoral accusations were aired and debated and the promised legislation was ignored.

Several incidents foretold what lay ahead. It was evident to the liberal forces, excepting the radicals, that

¹³Luis Brieba, Actuación del ejército en las elecciones de 1924 (Santiago: P. Lubournais, 1927 [?], p. 6.

¹⁴Ibid.

parliamentary system was unworkable. The question was how best to alter it, constitutionally or unconstitutionally. In some military circles there were rumors suggestive of answers to the question. A conference held by Carlos Ibáñez and Harbuckle Grove on the organization and function of the Junta Militares Españolas drew comment from many circles, as the public pondered if the military proposed to import Primo de Rivera's methods from Spain to Chile. At the same time it was said that the Minister of War, Gaspar Irujo Latorre, an avid Alessandrista, was sounding out officers on the possibilities of a revolution in favor of Alessandri. He suggested that Congress could be dissolved, allowing Alessandri to proceed with his reform plans.¹⁵

The right did not remain inactive meanwhile. As far back as November, 1923, suggestions had been given by the conservative press to the army. The most explicit was a cartoon appearing in the popular magazine Zig-Zag. It featured a military man, Altamirano, conversing with a figure who represented the Chilean people. Over their heads was a parrot in a cage, labeled "national congress." The figure said, "Wouldn't you like, my General Altamirano, to imitate your colleague Primo, and shut up this parrot?"¹⁶

There were, furthermore, secret civilian rightist organizations opposed to the Alessandri government and

¹⁵Aldunate (September 7, 1957), 19-22.

¹⁶"El remedio," Zig-Zag, XIA (November 10, 1923), 50.

advocating its overthrow. One of these groups was called FEA, the letters standing for tenacity, enthusiasm, and abnegation. It was an avowedly rightist group, pro-Catholic and anti-government and anti-asonic. The FEA served notice that it meant to enforce its convictions. It committed acts against certain Alessandristas. One night a group of FEA members ambushed the Minister of War, General Luis Brieba, and severely beat him. The culprits were never found.¹⁷ The organization next placed a bomb on the balcony of the home of Dr. Adeodata García Valenzuela, recently elected Grand Master of the Masons. Again the guilty were not discovered.¹⁸ A bomb was also placed in the home of Senator Ricardo Valdés Bustamante.¹⁹

Terrorism, however, was soon abandoned by the FEA and the right. The oligarchy turned openly to the military, already interested in overturning the government. The parliament was increasingly annoying to the military and the country. Even though the right and the military had varied plans on what the revolution was to accomplish, differences were buried in order to accomplish the first step: overthrow of the government.

¹⁷Carlos Vicuña Fuentes, La Tiranía en Chile (Santiago: Co. Imprenta y Litho. Universo, 1938-1939), I, 136.

¹⁸Ibid. Phillips remarks that Masons were special targets for the right because Alessandri had been elected a member of the Grand Council of Honor as one of five of his six cabinet ministers.

¹⁹Ibid.

By September, 1924, the grievances of the military still had not been resolved even though Alessandri personally remained sympathetic to their demands. All that was needed was a spark to ignite the proceedings. Discontent was most evident in the ranks of the younger officers, the majority of whom were pro-Alessandri. They were the most affected by the delay in promotions and the lack of salary adjustments. There was a strong inclination of opinion among these officers that proposed to take matters into their own hands. It would amount to disobedience, but there were several reasons which prodded the younger officers into mutiny, other than their basic grievances. First of all, three members of the armed forces, Lwing, Altamirano, and Brieba had served as ministers of war in Alessandri's cabinets, but they had been unable to obtain enactment of the desired laws. The younger officers were impatient and disregarded their commanders, who, in their opinion, had failed in their duties.²⁰ Secondly, the social background of the members of both the army and navy aided in creating a disposition toward insubordination. Army regulations restricted advancement into the higher ranks to graduates of the military school. This meant that many of the lesser officers were men from the middle class and the provinces, as the military school generally filled its vacancies with boys from the wealthy families of Santiago. The navy, however, was even more aristocratic.

²⁰Juan Pablo Bennett, La revolución del 5 de septiembre de 1924 (Santiago: Balcells y Co., 1926), p. 14.

It jealously conserved the tradition of family name and distinction. It was difficult for a young man to enter the naval school if he were from the middle class. Cases were reported of intelligent and capable students being dropped because of their family backgrounds. Being an officer of the navy gave entree to high society, and appealed to those with name and money. The course of study of the navy was rigorous, producing cultivated, well-mannered, and distinctive young officers. The army school was less rigorous, and at times proved a last refuge for young men of the wealthy class, as the army uniform did not carry the distinction of the naval uniform. Nevertheless, the navy was also divided in regards to the lower echelon of officers. On and off the ships the engineers disliked the officers, and the feeling was returned. The engineers were generally from the middle class and resented the airs of their superiors. At first the engineers and naval officers were educated in the same school, but in order to prevent conflicts, the engineering school was moved to Talcahuano.²¹

Both the army and navy, therefore, were composed of two segments, each representing a different social class, and, subsequently, a different political philosophy. Because of the unnatural situation that Chile found herself in during 1924, these divisions became more important and discernible. The middle class members of the army and navy were more directly concerned with the economic and social problems of

²¹Vicuña Fuentes, I, 137-138.

the country than were members of the legislature. They had experienced the injustices and inconveniences. The higher ranked officers were more concerned with the political situation as they saw Alessandri as a threat to their position in both the armed forces and society. The feeling was especially evident in the navy, and Alessandri distrusted the navy because of its aristocratic tenor and reactionary attitude. Discipline was stronger in the navy, however, and the lower officers, more liberal than their superiors, would not as readily mutiny.²² Alessandri trusted the army more than the navy, as many of the high officers were supporters of his government. Unfortunately, the trust was betrayed by the Inspector General of the Army, Altamirano, and the Chief of the Carabineros, Alfredo A. Ewing.²³

The parliament set the stage and furnished the issue around which all discontents rallied. Congress had kept most of Alessandri's projects tied up. Still pending were financial reforms, designed to solve many of the outstanding grievances. Included in these reforms were adjustments in the salaries of the military and of public employees. Furthermore, neither group had been paid for several months because of congressional refusal to pass the budget. The government hoped to break the stalemate and reunite the Liberal Alliance factions. To this end, a bill was presented

²²Ibid., pp. 138-139.

²³Ibid., p. 139.

with the government's blessing, to provide salaries for the legislators.

The legislators did not look unfavorably on the proposal, but the public responded adversely, and called the bill unconstitutional. The public employees were especially resentful as previously the government had talked about reducing their number in order to curtail national expenses. Giving salaries to the legislators was clearly not economizing.²⁴ The army, however, took more direct action.

On the evening of September 2 the senate was debating the salary measure. A group of young officers sat in the galleries to listen to the debates. It was to be a simple protest. They took no direct action except to applaud the speech of Eduardo Opezo when he attacked the congressional salary measure.²⁵

On September 3 the young officers were excited by the events which had occurred in the senate. Politicians had commented unfavorably on the presence of the officers in the galleries while the press generally applauded the action. In an editorial El Mercurio warned parliament not to expect.

If the parliamentary regime continues discrediting itself, if they insist on presenting themselves to the citizens as the permanent cause of misgovernment, of bankruptcy, of immorality, of sterility, they put in danger all democratic organizations of the country. We do not have to elaborate on these illusions, because already the consequences are apparent, crude and threatening.

²⁴Báez, I, 71.

²⁵Ibid., p. 72.

The project that the Senate must vote on today has certainly furthered the ruin of the parliamentary regime.²⁶

That night a large number of officers went to the Senate. The senators immediately complained. They protested the presence of the military because it constituted a threat, and because the rattling of sabers disturbed the proceedings. The Minister of the Treasury, Enrique Zañartu, asked the Minister of War, Gaspar Mora, for an explanation. Mora obliged and asked the military observers to retire from the galleries. The young officers obeyed but in retiring made more noise than was necessary.²⁷

From the Senate the officers went to the military club. Mora soon arrived to offer explanations, but his former comrades were cool. One remarked, "You come to give us explanations in private, after having slapped us publicly in the face with a whip."²⁸

The following day, September 4, public comment increased, and in the army there was a great deal of activity. Around noon Commander Charpin called a meeting of officers after he had returned from a meeting with the Minister of War. He brought the news that the government recognized the right of the officers to attend the sessions of the Senate, but it hoped that the officers would abstain from exercising

²⁶Bennett, p. 10.

²⁷Sáez, I, 74.

²⁸Ibid., p. 75.

this right. The government wanted to keep the public from interpreting these acts as signs of political intervention.

The temper of one of the officers was not conciliatory. He remarked in the following manner:

The army is, according to the Constitution, essentially obedient. It must respect the orders of the Executive, but in order for this to happen, it is necessary that we live under a regime truly constitutional. If tomorrow we come to the conclusion that our Constitution does not exist, because it has been violated by those who have the duty to respect it and to make it respected, no one could invoke its name to demand obedience from the armed forces. The commander in chief would have lost his legal status, and we would be able to work in the way that we felt was more in harmony with national interests, without having violated the orders of the government.²⁹

This declaration could only mean revolution. The meeting, however, ended without further remarks or incidents.

The same day a reception was given by the lieutenants in honor of the captains. Over 400 officers attended. Someone reported that General Altamirano had defended the action of the officers during a cabinet meeting. Altamirano was promptly invited to attend, and he soon entered, enthusiastically welcomed. He left the gathering early, but the officers remained, still talking.³⁰

While the officers were assembled, a notice came from Alessandri, who wanted to talk to a commission of the group. Captain Heraclio Valenzuela and two others were selected. The committee went to the interview and Alessandri asked that

²⁹Ibid., p. 76.

³⁰Ibid., p. 77.

the group draw up a list of projects that it thought the country urgently needed. He would then demand the immediate passage of these projects. He was reported to have said he would close Congress, if it did not pass the bills.³¹

These words served to excite the already-aroused officers further. Some believed Alessandri was going to use the army to establish a dictatorship. Others interpreted his statement and request as merely a practical political maneuver, for the Alliance majority, prodded by the military and Alessandri, would still have to approve the legislation. It appeared, nevertheless, that the army officers were eager to accept the dictator explanation as the Junta Militar officially released this opinion at a later time.³²

In any case the government, on the evening of September 4, was fighting its last battle, even though it did not realize it at that time. The government knew, however, that two things had to be consummated immediately; first, re-establishment of the army's discipline, and secondly, neutralization of the navy. With regard to the navy, Gaspar Mora was delegated to confer with high officers of this service and, after consultation, announced that the navy would not take part in the proceedings. Pedro Aguirre Cerda, Minister of Interior, approached the army, issuing assurances that

³¹Ibid.

³²Junta Militar, "Explicación necesaria," El Mercurio, November 30, 1924, p. 3.

its demands would be approved. Both Iora and Aguirre Cerda were fooled. The navy had already been contacted by the rebels and it would send representatives to the meeting of the military club scheduled for September 5. Discipline was broken and could not be re-established by simple assurances.³³

Rumors circulated which served to encourage disobedience. A reporter informed the officers that the government was planning to punish those involved in the incident. The reporter said that the Minister of Interior had drawn up a long list of officers, some to be sent to faraway posts, and others to be tried for sedition. The reporter was then asked how the government intended to enforce its sentences, to which he replied that carabineros of Lapuche origin were being brought from the South, and troops from the naval station at Talcahuano would reinforce them. Also, he added, worker militias, formed by the employees of the naval station, were being organized. These rumors could only serve to spur the army officers onward for, if they were true, it meant they had little time left.³⁴

At 10:00 A. M. the next morning a meeting was held at which the petition, drawn up by Lieutenant Colonel Carlos Ibañez and Lieutenant Alejandro Lazo, was presented. In all there were thirteen articles:

³³Sáez, I, 78-79.

³⁴Aldunate (October 5, 1957), 78-79.

1. Immediate veto of the law of parliamentary salaries
2. Passage of the budget
3. Reform of the organic laws of the army
4. Augmentation of the pay of the Carabineros, Navy, and Army
5. Modification of the income tax
6. Pensions to the survivors of the War of the Pacific
7. Stabilization of the currency
8. Passage of the work code and the rest of the laws of social character
9. Passage of the law concerning private employees
10. Payment of back salaries to public school teachers and other public employees
11. Retirement of the ministers Salas Romo, Enrique Sanfuta, and Gaspar Lora
12. The minister of War must always be a professional soldier
13. Absolute exclusion of the members of the army and navy from internal political events.³⁵

The petition was approved unanimously. At the same meeting a military committee was formed, and from it was selected a delegation to present the petition to Alessandri. Alessandri received the committee at 11:30 A. M.³⁶

Colonel Ahumada, spokesman for the group, asked Lieutenant Alejandro Lazo to explain the reasons which had prompted the officers to take action and formulate the petition. According to Alessandri:

Lazo stood up and declared that the army had been completely abandoned by public powers, that it was neither heard or attended to. He added that this could not continue while there existed so many meaningful problems of national interest without solution,

³⁵Sáez, I, 30-31. The versions of the petitions differed. General Bennett included in his list reform of the Constitution including a provision for parliamentary salaries. Number 12 was not included. Number 13 differed in that it stated "Absolute and permanent exclusion of the members of the Army and Navy from electoral struggles and of any act of a political character." Bennett, p. 29.

³⁶Aldunate (October 12, 1957), p. 28.

while Congress lost time in long and sterile discussions. He complained of politics, of intrigue, blaming these circumstances on bad government, disorder, and parliamentary sterility.³⁷

Lazo ended his expose by presenting the list of articles approved by the military committee.

When Lazo finished reading the petition, Alessandri, making a last attempt to dominate the "frankly revolutionary" situation, asked the group what he had done wrong. He reminded them that he had named three officers as minister of war, and had always tried to serve the interests of the army. He assured them that the petition contained the fundamental parts of his program, but the article demanding the resignation of three ministers was open insubordination. Alessandri announced that he would call in Aguirre Cerda to hear the petition. This was done, but as Aguirre Cerda entered, Alessandri noted a sudden aggressiveness on Lazo's part.³⁸

Lazo was asked to explain to Aguirre Cerda the officers' reasons for petitioning. When Lazo had finished, Aguirre requested a few minutes in order to confer with his cabinet colleagues. Lazo replied that he had come only to meet with the President, not with the cabinet for he would present petitions involving public well-being only to the President. "And in that moment, Lazo, correcting himself

³⁷Arturo Alessandri, Recuerdos de gobierno, I (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1952), 321.

³⁸Ibid., p. 322.

said, 'Better said, we have come to demand.'"39

Alessandri stood up, walked over to where Lazo stood, and retorted:

My post and my life, two things that have little importance to me at this moment, are in your hands because you have the force. You are capable, if you wish, of tearing from me and stamping on the national tricolor that my fellow citizens handed to me as a symbol of my office. But, there is something for me that is worth much more than my life and the post: my personal dignity. That I defend; it is mine. You nor no one else are capable of snatching it from me; it is worth more than life, and the last word you used prevents me from continuing this conference. We have ended!40

The other members of the committee apologized to the President, and all swore their obedience and loyalty. After these oaths of allegiance Alessandri was hopeful that the revolution had ended, and he consented to continue the conference. He asked the committee, in all frankness, if it would be satisfied with the realization of the petition. All agreed. Alessandri then promised to answer the petition the same afternoon, through the intermediation of General Altamirano.⁴¹

Events moved swiftly. Alessandri conferred with his cabinet on the petition. Its reply was its resignation. Alessandri then contacted General Altamirano, telling him that the petition was accepted by the government, and offered him the post of Minister of Interior in a new cabinet.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 322-323.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 323-324.

⁴¹Aldunate (October 19, 1957), 25.

Altamirano accepted the charge and began the task of forming the rest of the cabinet. He approached several men, but all refused to serve. He then resolved to confer with the officers before filling the post of Minister of War.

That afternoon and evening the military club, the headquarters of the rebel officers, was again the scene of lively discussions. Altamirano arrived during the evening, announcing that the cabinet was formed. All applauded this announcement.⁴² The important question, however, remained unanswered. Congress had to reject or approve the list of projects, but it was not scheduled to meet for several days.

September 6 was a busy day for both the politicians and the military. It was known that the Liberal Alliance had voted to approve the projects that the army demanded. The Radical party, however, issued a statement calling on its members to sacrifice in defense of public liberties and to oppose the regime of force which had been installed.⁴³ Conservative newspapers, headed by El Diario Ilustrado, crowed their delight at the events. One writer remarked, "The military has wished to imitate the example of Christ: it has expelled the money lenders from the temple."⁴⁴

⁴²Sáez, I, 83.

⁴³El Mercurio, September 6, 1924, p. 5.

⁴⁴Ismael Edwards Matte, "Ruico de sables," El Diario Ilustrado, September 5, 1924, p. 3. It might appear strange that the Conservatives applauded a movement which demanded radical social and economic reforms, but they were more interested in ousting Alessandri than in the proposals. Furthermore, if the Alessandri administration collapsed, they believed they could dominate any subsequent government.

The military committee held three meetings during the day. In the first session Bartolomé Blanche was chosen as president of the group. Ibáñez emerged as the spokesman for a large sector, and because of his vigorous action, gained a great deal of support in the committee. The goal of the movement was also discussed and some expressed opinions that Alessandri should be removed. In the third session events took a decided turn. Alessandri had called for a conference with one of the military leaders, who announced that Alessandri wanted a new petition which would contain a point saying the parliamentary system had failed and urging a return to the presidential system. The committee rejected this request.⁴⁵

The following day the debate on Alessandri's future continued. Reports were also given by commissions, established previously, on certain plans; constitutional reform, economic reform, social reform, and others. The cabinet reported that it would demand that Congress pass the laws referred to in the petition. If it refused, the cabinet would ask Alessandri to dissolve Congress.⁴⁶

This planted a serious question in the Junta Militar. What would the group do if Alessandri dissolved Congress? Would it give its aid to the government? There was a strong sentiment for pledging the Junta's aid to Alessandri whatever happened. Sáez, who was opposed to this idea, had another

⁴⁵Sáez, I, 90.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 92.

suggestion. He proposed that, in case Congress did not approve the laws, Alessandri resign. He could then ask all his followers to aid the government that Altamirano would consequently head. Altamirano could dissolve Congress and proceed with the reforms. The plan was not approved, however, and the project giving unconditional support to Alessandri passed, three votes being cast against it.⁴⁷

September 8 was to be the day as Congress was to debate the projects. Other events transpired which also had bearing on the situation. It was learned that the navy had formally allied itself to the Junta Militar, and the armed forces were now officially united. The most important developments, however, occurred in Congress.

The session of the Senate was tranquil, considering the pressure that had been brought on the body. The Unión Nacional senators had declared they would boycott the session and nearly half the seats were vacant. The session opened with the reading of a petition, signed by unionists of the Chamber of Deputies. Altamirano, as minister of interior, then read his message asking for the series of projects, and explained the formation of his cabinet.

This ministry has been organized, obeying one single sentiment; that is the love of the country and the respect for its institutions. It does not represent a party interest and is inspired only by the highest national interest. It asks the patriotic support of all Chileans, and especially that of

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 93-94.

the representatives of the people, without distinction of political creed.⁴⁸

With a minimum of discussion the Senate passed the measures, 17 voting yes, one no, and two abstaining. In all it took fifteen minutes to approve the fourteen laws. The Chamber of Deputies also concurred with Altamirano's request, but not before Pedro Leon Ugalde, an outspoken radical deputy, delivered an eloquent address, protesting government by bayonets.⁴⁹

No one could deny, however, that the morning's labor in Congress had been fruitful. In total fourteen measures were approved: appropriation of 110 million pesos to balance the budget, a law on cooperatives, reform of the law on work accidents, betterment of the conditions of private employees, a code of regulations for labor unions, a project on compulsory insurance for the sick and invalid, modification of the laws on retirement of officers and reform of the Caja de Retiro y Montepio of the army and navy, modification of the regulations of promotion in the army, augmenting of the pay of petty officers and troops of the army and navy, approval of fringe benefits for the carabineros and employees of the carabineros, and reorganization of the police.⁵⁰

During the afternoon of September 8 all work seemed concluded. The Junta Militar was scheduled to meet, when its

⁴⁸Aldunate (October 26, 1957), 27.

⁴⁹Aldunate (November 23, 1957), 19-21.

⁵⁰Aldunate (October 26, 1957), 27.

members heard the unexpected announcement that Alessandri had decided to resign. At first glance his resignation seemed unexplainable, for on September 7 the Junta Militar had pledged its unconditional support to the President. Congress had enacted the laws that the military had demanded. Alessandri, himself, stated, "I believed that with this all was over, such as they had explained to me in the meeting of September 5."⁵¹ He continued:

It was with surprise that I received the notice that was carried in all the newspapers that the military or revolutionary Junta had resolved to function until it ended with the political and administrative purification of the country.

I understood in this act that all had ended: that they had not said what they thought in the meeting of the 5 of September and that, in demanding from the Congress the laws that they asked of me as a basis for a solution, I had committed an error, and that my error had one penalty: my resignation.⁵²

The news of Alessandri's resignation caused a flurry of discussion in the Junta Militar. After deliberation, the Junta released a communication:

1) The Junta Militar communicates to the cabinet its belief, interpreting the general feeling of the officers, that His Excellency the President of the republic should not insist on his resignation and that, instead, should solicit permission to absent himself from the country;

2) The Junta guarantees the personal safety of His Excellency the President of the republic and all the members of his family;

3) The President of the republic will leave the country with all the honors of his position;

4) These agreements were unanimously adopted by the 43 members who compose the Junta.

Santiago, 8 September 1924 Bartolomé Blanche⁵³

⁵¹El Mercurio, November 29, 1924, p. 17.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Sáez, I, 98.

On the same day Alessandri presented his resignation. That night he left the Moneda to seek political asylum in the Embassy of the United States. On September 9, therefore, the situation had completely reversed itself. The military and the politicians were left with the task of forming a new government. Alessandri's resignation also posed a thorny political problem. Accepting the resignation meant that new elections had to be scheduled. The Liberal Alliance was not in favor of new elections, because it feared the consequences. As it controlled Congress, which had to accept or reject the resignation, The Alliance was able to muster a majority of votes and to compromise, rejecting his resignation and granting him permission to leave the country for six months.⁵⁴

Rumors circulated in Santiago concerning the solution of the presidential crisis. Alessandristas organized demonstrations in favor of their leader. The students were especially active and protested against the military. The military realized that the continued presence of Alessandri in the country would only add to the disorders. Pressure from the navy and from some members of the Junta Militar forced the cabinet to act. On September 10, Alessandri left Chile for Argentina. At the same time the civilian members of the cabinet resigned, saying that the duty of maintaining internal order belonged to the officers of the armed forces, and that they would have to assume the responsibility of

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 102.

government during the extraordinary situation.⁵⁵

The remaining cabinet ministers carried on the duties of government. They held conferences with the Junta Militar in order to learn its thought concerning the proposed dissolution of Congress. The Junta announced its approval of the plan and the decree was released on September 11. The same day, a manifesto entitled "To the country" was released, which announced that a Junta of Government (Junta de gobierno), had been formed, consisting of General Luis Altamirano, Admiral Francisco Ref, and General Juan Bennett. The actual decree constituting the Junta of Government was also released the same day. The Junta Militar independently released two documents, one explaining the political goals of the movement, the other addressed to the armed forces.⁵⁶

The Junta of Government announced in its manifesto that it would work for the re-establishment of constitutional order and, as soon as possible, elections would be held. Upon the realization of these goals, the Junta would disband, returning the government to those selected in the election. The Junta Militar, however, announced other ideals.

"Our goal is to convoke a free constituent assembly from which will come a Constitution that corresponds to national desires. We will then proceed to the election of public officials, upon enlarged

⁵⁵Bennett, p. 69.

⁵⁶Sáez, I, 105.

and free registration. Constituted these powers, our mission will have ended.⁵⁷

The discrepancies between the two manifestos introduced the second chapter of the military revolutions of Chile. The Junta of Government spoke in terms of a simple change in those who ran the state. The Junta Militar, on the other hand, was interested in a thorough revamping of the national political system. At first the differences were unimportant, but in a short time the Junta Militar began to question the political character of the Junta of Government.

The Junta of Government began the task of forming a cabinet, and announced its choices without consulting the Junta Militar. General Bennett later remarked that this was the first political error of the governmental Junta.⁵⁸ At the same time the Junta of Government made a second political error. Prior to the administration of the oaths to the future cabinet members, all had asked Altamirano if the Junta Militar still existed. He replied negatively, and upon that base they entered to form part of the cabinet.⁵⁹ The first cabinet was composed of Alcibiádes Roldán, Interior; Carlos Aldunate Solar, Foreign Relations; Gregorio Amunátegui, Justice and Education; Fidel Muñoz Rodríguez, Treasury; Admiral

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Bennett, p. 97.

⁵⁹Ibid.

Luis Gómez C., War and Navy; and Oscar Dávila, Industry and Public Works.⁶⁰

On September 12, the new cabinet took the oath. The Junta Militar met the same day to consider the new cabinet. Several of the members protested the inclusion of Dávila, ex-chief of the TDA, and Muñoz R., a decided enemy of Alessandri. But in face of the fait accompli, the Junta could do little. The Junta Militar, however, did not intend to dissolve itself; the idea was not even discussed.

The cabinet began working the same day. One of its first decrees was the acceptance of Alessandri's resignation.⁶¹ Several days later, the Junta of Government invested Altamirano with the office of President of the Junta.⁶² There were subsequent repercussions in the Junta Militar.

Upon the completion of the revolution the Junta Militar unanimously supported the government, although two contrary currents of thought soon appeared. The majority of the officers opposed the ministry because of the known rightist views of certain of its members, and called for its transformation. The minority felt the Junta should not interfere in the government.⁶³ In any case the Junta busied

⁶⁰Sáez, I, 115.

⁶¹Bennett, p. 99.

⁶²Ibid., p. 101.

⁶³Sáez, I, 117.

itself in several ways. Committees were formed, as if the Junta were Congress, to study national problems. Even though the Junta declared it would not be a political partisan of any one group political debates were frequent occurrences. Ibañez headed the majority group and criticized the government on numerous occasions.⁶⁴

To make matters worse the Junta of Government tended to ignore the existence of the Junta Militar. The cabinet, especially, intended to receive orders only from the Junta of Government. One example involved Cárdenas personally. He was a member of the subcommission of the military Junta studying constitutional and electoral reform. After several meetings the committee decided to confer with the Minister of Interior so that he would know the thoughts of the Junta Militar on these reforms. The Minister received the commission "coldly," and seemed to be surprised that the Junta still existed. The minister said, "You speak to me, Major, of a Junta that I don't know, and of studies that I don't know who charged you to do." Finally he allowed the commission to give its report. Even though Roldán apparently sympathized with the report, his first reaction, which was quickly reported to the Junta Militar, produced a greater effect.⁶⁵

The division between the Junta Militar and the

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 119.

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 120-121.

government was deepened by this and similar incidents. Ideological differences also appeared. The Junta Militar had made the revolution, but had lost it at the same time. For the majority of the military Junta the revolution had been betrayed by the Junta of Government and the cabinet. The officers were not ready to resort to overt rebellion against the government, but a series of events transpired which compelled them to do so.

CHAPTER II

THE REVOLUTION OF 1925 AND THE ELECTION OF FIGUEROA

Most moderate sectors of public opinion passively accepted the revolution with the exception of the radical and Demócrata parties, plus the hard core of the Alessandrista movement. In other quarters the military intervention was greeted with words of praise and rejoicing. The conservative press ecstatically thanked the armed forces. Zig-Zag called the movement an attempt "to amputate what was national gangrene."¹ One writer in El Diario Ilustrado, calling the Alessandri government a punishment from God, said the revolution proved God was Chilean. "The Lord tested us," he wrote, "but He did not want us to annihilate ourselves." The men of honor and the army, according to the writer, would return Chile to her past glories.²

The conservative press also compared the revolution to the Fascist movement of Italy and Primo de Rivera's coup in Spain. Zig-Zag called it a "blow from the same wave that

¹Juan Caceres, "Comentario sabatino," Zig-Zag, XX (September 13, 1924), 37.

²Señora M. M. Luisa Fernández de G. H., "Sursum corda," El Diario Ilustrado, September 6, 1924, p. 3.

burst on Russia, afterwards on Italy, on Spain, on France: a violent desire for authority, order and discipline."³ The conservative church newspaper analyzed the movements, reminding its readers that events rarely occurred sporadically without being related to others. It pointed out that Italian fascism was a political movement, while the Chilean military hoped to stay out of politics. Furthermore, Italian fascism hoped to perpetuate itself, while "our movement only wanted to complete its job and return to its work." The paper concluded that the Spanish movement was more similar. Both searched for a better government, both dissolved parliament, with the main difference being that Primo de Rivera had not called for elections to replace the Spanish parliament. Also, Spain's government was military, while "ours" had been returned to the civilians.⁴

The Conservatives did not rely only on their newspapers to express their support for the military movement. The Unión Nacional officially expressed its desire to cooperate with the government.⁵ Altamirano thanked the group for its pledge, but reiterated the government's hope "to count on the patriotic aid of all Chileans, without distinction of political creed."⁶

³"El movimiento militar," Zig-Zag, LX (September 13, 1924), 38.

⁴"Nuestro caso y los de Italia y España," El Diario Ilustrado, September 17, 1924, p. 3.

⁵El Mercurio, September 10, 1924, p. 1.

⁶Las Últimas Noticias, September 10, 1924, p. 1.

Even though Altamirano hoped for bipartisan political support, he had to face realities. The left wing parties had already issued pronouncements damning the military government. The Radical party had told its members to oppose the coup actively. Altamirano was relatively isolated and had no choice but to accept the aid of the Unión Nacional. With only the support of the Unión Nacional, the government could not pretend to represent the majority, as the Liberal Alliance represented a larger electorate. Independents, moderates, and opportunists did rally to Altamirano's banner. His government did not entirely reflect the wishes of the Unión Nacional.

The search for political collaborators was only part of Altamirano's worries. The army had to be placated and kept from further meddling. Altamirano had complied with its demands and had succeeded in enacting into law the proposals included in the petition. But the Junta Militar was still not entirely satisfied. The difference in opinion between the two Juntas concerning the goals of the September revolution was published early. As time passed, this difference developed into a serious split.

In the latter part of October relations began to deteriorate. It was apparent that the situation could not continue, for the government had either to dominate the Junta Militar or grant it a larger voice in the affairs of state. October 24, being Army Day, a dinner was held in the School of Cavalry. Only those officers of the Junta who were avowed

opponents of the Junta of Government were invited and some officers who were not members of the Junta Militar were included. The government was criticized in strong terms by the speakers. One suggested that a group of junior naval officers, who were present at the dinner, be incorporated into the Junta Militar even though four senior naval officers were already members. As a great number of the Junta members were present, a meeting was held and the suggestion approved. Several officers who attended the dinner attempted to cool the tempers of the speakers and were able to stave off any further outbursts.⁷

The members of the Junta Militar who had not attended the dinner were not ready to accept this alteration in its membership. The four senior naval officers were especially indignant. Ibáñez, as director of the School of Cavalry, defended the action of the anti-government forces. The pro-government officers, being in the definite minority, could do little but complain.⁸

The Junta elected a committee to establish a permanent channel of communication between it and the cabinet, and anti-government forces were able to elect a majority of the committee members. The cabinet agreed to meet with the committee twice weekly, and it also promised to submit all

⁷Carlos Sáez Morales, Recuerdos de un soldado, Vol. I: El ejército y la política (Santiago: Editorial Ercilla, 1934), p. 127.

⁸Ibid.

bills to the Junta Militar before the bills were promulgated as laws. Even though this appeared to be a concession from the cabinet, it did not promise to adopt the suggestions presented to it by the Junta Militar. The stalemate continued, therefore, and both sides momentarily rested.⁹

Soon afterwards, however, the government again took up the cudgels. It had said it would submit all proposed laws to the military Junta before decreeing them. The Junta Militar was especially interested in electoral reform and had several proposals ready to present. The government responded by independently decreeing a new electoral law and setting presidential elections for May, 1925, in direct violation of the pact agreed to with the Junta Militar. This proved to be the final straw for the Junta Militar.¹⁰

The government had acted foolishly, for it succeeded only in divorcing itself from its strongest adherents. The cabinet, however, did not realize that alienating the military Junta could lead to painful consequences. The Unión Nacional, besides, was lobbying for elections before the Alliance recuperated the prestige it had lost with the downfall of the Alessandri administration. The government, furthermore, by issuing the decree independently, destroyed the moderate and pro-government sympathy in the Junta. Ibáñez and his followers now proceeded in the Junta virtually unhindered.

⁹Ibid., pp. 127-128.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 129.

Meetings were held and representatives of the Junta Militar met with the cabinet. Demands and accusations were aired. A momentary stalemate again developed as the Junta Militar could not hope to achieve all of its demands. It still lacked political allies.

Public opinion came to the rescue of the Junta as there was a general disapproval of the electoral reforms decreed by the government. Criticism was raised over provisions of the law which retained many of the objectional features of the old law. The accumulate vote was especially unacceptable, and many were disappointed that the law did not provide penalties for the crime of electoral interference. The cabinet realized some modifications were necessary and the Junta Militar was contacted in order to learn its ideas. The Junta again introduced the problem of constitutional reform into the conferences. As the cabinet would not agree to these demands, the negotiations broke down.¹¹

As long as negotiations continued, the final rupture between the Junta and the government was not definite. Soon this break transpired. After the decree announcing elections was issued, the political parties began organizing for the campaign. El Diario Ilustrado of December 5, 1924, created a sensation in political circles by announcing that Colonel Alfredo Ewing, Chief of the Carabineros, was being recommended by the military as a presidential candidate. The

¹¹Ibid., pp. 135-136.

government, wanting to keep the military from entering the political campaign, called Ewing to the Moneda. According to Bennett, Ewing gave satisfactory explanations and discounted the rumors.¹² Ewing also expressed his willingness to leave his post in order to dispell all rumors, if the government felt it were necessary. The Minister of Interior, in a subsequent interview with Ewing, accepted his resignation as Commander of Carabineros.¹³

A special meeting of the Junta Militar was called the evening that Ewing's resignation was announced. The anti-government Junta members violently attacked the cabinet, ignoring the true motives that had prompted its action. A motion was discussed that called for the immediate reinstatement of Ewing. On December 12 the military Junta asked the cabinet for an explanation of its action. An explanation was given, but the committee was not satisfied. The Junta held further meetings and debated future policy toward the cabinet. A motion calling for the organization of a new cabinet was finally approved.¹⁴

Negotiations were renewed with the cabinet, and from the series of meetings came a proposal. The cabinet was willing to resign in the interest of national tranquility, if, at the same time, the Junta Militar would dissolve. The

¹²Juan Pablo Bennett, La revolución del 5 de septiembre de 1924 (Santiago : Balcells y Co., 1926), p. 155.

¹³Ibid., p. 157.

¹⁴Saez, I, 143.

government's proposal had the backing of the navy and a sector of the army.¹⁵ In the face of this pressure the Junta Militar agreed to the proposal on December 13, declared itself dissolved.¹⁶ A public announcement was released by Blanche, stating:

1. That the Junta Militar never thought to proclaim a military candidate for the presidency;
2. That it resolved to put an end to its functions by its own incentive, considering that, after the incidents which took place at the rumors concerning Colonel Ewing, this was the most patriotic solution;
3. That, taking this step, the members of the Junta Militar reiterate their absolute confidence in the Junta of Government, deeply convinced that the people who compose this Junta will know how to carry out to a successful conclusion the movement headed by the armed forces.

Bartolomé Blanche¹⁷

So ended the real core of the movement of September; the group that had been the impulse behind the revolution. The demise of the Junta Militar had been a goal of the cabinet and the navy. Even the military chiefs whom the Junta itself had placed in high positions favored its dissolution. Few lamented its passing except those who were truly interested in reform. But the mere dissolution of the Junta Militar could not erase the fact that there was a current of opinion in the army opposed to the government. Apparently, the movement of September had ended with the removal of Alessandri and the dissolution of Congress. This fact the Junta Militar failed to realize.

¹⁵Bennett, pp. 162-165.

¹⁶Sáez, I, 145.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 147.

Altamirano, with the announcement of the dissolution of the Junta Militar, began to form another cabinet in compliance with the agreement. Instead of profiting by his first error, the second cabinet had an even more unionist tint.¹⁸ Shortly following the announcement of the new cabinet came the news that the Unión Nacional had selected Ladislao Errázuriz as its candidate for the presidency. Sáez described the reception of this announcement.

. . . his candidacy was something like a provocation thrown to the men who had sustained that government. [Alessandri's] He had another defect . . . winds of democracy blew, and he was one of the representatives most characteristic of our stale aristocracy, making him appear as the incarnation of the reactionay spirit.¹⁹

During the days of the Junta Militar the mention of Errázuriz's name was enough to cause an outburst,²⁰ for the young officers had little sympathy for him.

There was, nevertheless, virtually no electoral alternative. The Liberal Alliance remained discredited. There was an attempt to unite all the liberals into one party, in order that the government could rely on a solid and moderate political party, but the attempt failed. It appeared that Errázuriz would win the election by default. The Liberal Alliance could not hope to win without a candidate who could reunite the parties as in 1920. Feelers were put

¹⁸Ibid., p. 156.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

out to Alessandri by the Radicals and Demócratas, but he was noncommittal.²¹

The politicians, however, were not to have their election. Rumors circulated of a possible counterrevolution designed to topple Altamirano. The center of the discontent lay with the core of true reformers who had belonged to the defunct Junta Militar, headed, as before, by Ibáñez. With the dissolution of the Junta there was no indication that the group had continued meeting, but with the candidacy of Errázuriz and the specter of an apparent victory of the right, the members once again contacted each other.

In reality the January movement was not widespread or well organized. It succeeded because of the aid of some politicians and the neutrality of most of the army officers. Altamirano was aware of the rumors and in an attempt to re-establish discipline in the army, visited the headquarters of many of the units of Santiago. At the same time Altamirano speeded up the process of placing many of the ex-Junta Militar leaders in new posts, far away from Santiago. Many of Ibáñez's followers were scattered and January 15 Ibáñez himself and his assistant, Lieutenant Lazo, were ordered to prepare for a foreign appointment. All the officers affected apparently were obeying their orders. Lieutenant Lazo even asked Bennett for funds in order to buy a horse in France and enroll in a course of horsemanship.²² For the first time in

²¹Ibid., p. 158.

²²Bennett, p. 360.

several months the government was able to relax. Order seemed re-established, even though El Mercurio described the situation as a city that had had one earthquake and imminently expected another.²³

Nearly everyone, except the cabinet, expected an attempt to overthrow the government, but all were amazed at the ease with which it was accomplished. During the afternoon of January 23 Altamirano had contacted the Minister of War informing him that troops were reportedly to attack the Moneda. The Minister of War, Inspector General of the Army, and the navy all swore their loyalty to Altamirano and promised to oppose any attempt at altering the political order. Police were ordered to guard the Moneda.

At 5:30 P.M. the rebels appeared. The contingent consisted of officers of the School of Cavalry with some mounted troops, two squads of Cazadores, and two companies of the Regiment Pudeto. The only opposition was the police, for the rest of the promised defenders were not in evidence. Altamirano and his cabinet were simply ejected and a revolutionary committee established. Two manifestos were quickly released by the garrison of Santiago, explaining the object of the movement. The important sections of these releases were the call for the return of Alessandri to the presidency, the summons for a constitutional assembly, and the

²³El Mercurio, January 24, 1925, p. 3.

announcement that the movement was based on the September 11 manifesto of the Junta Militar.²⁴

It was apparent that the new movement was headed by the anti-government members of the Junta Militar as the objectives of the movement were those from the original manifesto of September 11. The political orientation of the January movement also contrasted with the earlier one. The return of Alessandri would signify a reassertion of the power of the Liberal Alliance in the government.

Aside from all discussion of the composition or political orientation of the new Junta, one fact remained. The army had again interfered in politics, destroying in the process the government it had created earlier. It was able to accomplish this without meeting much opposition. The public was apathetic, if not sympathetic. The revolution of September had failed, and the January movement was organized to revitalize the original attempt. But calling the movement of September a revolution would be incorrect. The men who assumed leadership of the government were not revolutionists, only reformers. After they had ousted Alessandri, their only desire was to restore civil government. The movement of January, on the other hand, was more rightly called a revolution, for it proposed deep-seated change which was truly revolutionary.

The idiosyncracies of Chilean politics again favored

²⁴Bennett, pp. 365-374.

Alessandri. He had left in September, 1924, defeated and disappointed; but in March, 1925, he returned and was greeted by a gigantic popular demonstration. At the moment Alessandri appeared the victor. In the background, however, remained his future enemy, the man who headed the January movement to return Alessandri to the presidency, Lieutenant Colonel Carlos Ibáñez del Campo. It appeared ironic that the man the military had overthrown four months earlier was asked to return. But the military had little choice; there was no other alternative. The military either had to choose Alessandri or the Unión Nacional, and it chose the León de Tarapacá, as he appeared to be the only one capable of instituting the desired reforms.²⁵ There was also a general frustration in the army; a desire to cleanse itself from what it had done in September. Many of the officers felt the September movement had failed, and the only thing to do was to return the country to the rightful president.²⁶ The military forgot, however, that when discipline was once broken, it was difficult to re-establish it. Alessandri might be returned triumphantly, but who could predict his future?

The January movement had been successful in the sense that it controlled the Moneda. After the initial shock had passed, public opposition appeared, although somewhat limited

²⁵Enrique Monreal, Historia completa y documentada del período revolucionario, 1924-1925 (n. p., n. d.), p. 130.

²⁶Ibid., p. 134.

as the mouthpiece of the Unión Nacional, El Diario Ilustrado, was ordered closed.²⁷ The navy, heavily committed to Altamirano, released a document stating that "The national Navy does not accept this movement in the form that it has taken and in its political ends."²⁸ Some predicted civil war unless the navy was immediately pacified. The Junta of Government, headed by two respected generals, Pedro Pablo Dartnell and Juan E. Ortiz Vega, quickly dispatched an emissary to the navy, hoping a compromise could be arranged. The naval-government split was deepened, however, by the declaration of the Junta that postponed presidential elections until a constitutional assembly had been formed.²⁹

The navy, nevertheless, consented to meet with the representative of the Junta. A list of demands was presented by the navy and an agreement signed. As a result, a Junta was formed of one civilian, Emilio Bello C., as president, General Pedro Pablo Dartnell, from the army, and Admiral Carlos Ward, from the navy. The Junta was to serve until Alessandri returned. A cabinet was organized and elections were postponed until a constitutional convention was called.³⁰ Ibáñez was appointed Minister of War in the cabinet, a position he was not to relinquish until February 1927.

²⁷El Mercurio, January 24, 1925, p. 3.

²⁸El Mercurio, January 24, 1925, p. 15.

²⁹El Mercurio, January 25, 1925, p. 15.

³⁰Emilio Bello Codesido, Recuerdos políticos (Santiago: Imp. Nascimento, 1954), p. 77.

The navy proved not to be the only problem for the Junta. El Diario Ilustrado had been reopened and immediately began to exploit the precarious truce between the government and the navy. Censorship was again imposed on the paper.³¹ The Junta feared that insults from the press would cause the army to find its own solution to remedy the situation. Furthermore, the right attempted directly to stir up the army. At the end of February the Junta had to move quickly in order to quell a rebellion in the Valdivia Regiment. The result for the unionists involved was deportation, one of those being Ladislao Errázuriz.³² The regiment, too, was dissolved and its members distributed among other units.³³

Alessandri returned in March and apparently future civilian government was saved. He rapidly began the work that remained for him: the writing of a new constitution. On April 7 he named a consultative commission to study the means of organizing a constituent assembly. A subcommittee studied various reforms which would be presented to the assembly. Upon ending its studies at the end of July, the committee recommended that its proposals be submitted to a direct plebiscite instead of a constitutional assembly. The politicians protested, led by the Conservatives and Radicals.

³¹Ibid., p. 112.

³²Carlos Sáez Morales, Recuerdos de un soldado, Vol. II: Genesis y derrumbe de la dictadura (Santiago: Editorial Arcilla, 1933), p. 10.

³³Bello Codesido, p. 143.

The problem was made increasingly delicate because in the September 11 manifesto, upon which the January movement was based, the army had called for a constituent assembly, not a plebiscite, to reform the constitution. The Inspector General of the Army, General Navarrete, also a member of the consultative commission, had to pronounce on the proposal. Secretly, he called the heads of the army together on July 20, in order to reach a settlement. It was agreed that the sub-committee's findings had to be approved and the army leaders, therefore, shelved the idea of a constituent assembly.³⁴

A meeting of the entire consultative commission was held July 22, presided over by Alessandri. The army's opinion had not been publicized; and the politicians, from the beginning, monopolized the proceedings. For two days the radicals discussed whether a parliamentary or a presidential system should be established by the new Constitution. The representatives of the army were soon disgusted with the meetings as the politicians veered from discussing the topic, the report of the sub-committee. Alessandri pleaded with the commission, remarking that in the sub-committee, where all had had an opportunity to debate the virtues of parliamentary and presidential systems, all had agreed on the presidential system. Navarrete, who was "profoundly impressed," asked for the floor. The request produced a great deal of comment in the commission.³⁵

³⁴Sáez, II, 11-12.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 15-16.

Navarette concisely and explicitly stated the army's opinion.

It isn't necessary to be a great constitutionalist to declare without fear of being wrong that the results of the parliamentary system have been disastrous for the country. . . .

The leaders of the diverse political parties in which public opinion is divided must learn, on this occasion, the many objective lessons that they have received since the 5th of September until today.

Do not consider this as a threat, since I am not authorized to make it, but I believe firmly that at these solemn moments we must not conceal the danger and that we are obligated to speak clearly.

Presently, the army is handling fully the labors that are its own, limiting itself in the rest to observing the action of those charged with realizing its ideals of order and administrative purification.

What would happen if the hopes of the youth were defrauded on this occasion? I do not want to make disagreeable predictions.

I leave to your judgment the task of formulating a reply to this delicate question.

The army . . . has a horror of politics, and consequently, will never mix in your activities; but you can be sure that it will not look with indifference on your ideas of national purification. This is not to say that it does not forget the finalities of the revolutions of the 5th of September and of the 23rd of January. . . .³⁶

The opposition did not remain silent, and reminded the army that the September 11 manifesto called for a constituent assembly. Alessandri stood up and retorted, "You want a constituent assembly? I am going from here to my office in order to convoke a free constituent assembly."³⁷ He then suspended the session.³⁸ The opposition in the commission was stunned. The majority recovered quickly and voted to

³⁶Ibid., pp. 16-18.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 18-19.

³⁸Ibid., p. 19.

ask Alessandri to return and reopen the session. Alessandri agreed, and the major part of the Radicals stalked out. After listening to several more speeches, the commission approved the report submitted by the subcommittee.³⁹ It was evident that Navarette's words and the León's theatrical ability had turned the tide, and the government was saved at a difficult moment. On August 30, 1925, the Constitution was approved by the electorate and the parliamentary system officially ended.

Alessandri's troubles did not end with the approval of the Constitution. Soon after he had returned the political parties had begun preparing themselves for the future presidential election. The Radical party proposed a United Civil Front.⁴⁰ The opposition formed a Social Republican Front. The battle lines were being drawn and the contest promised to be bitter.

Rumors circulated that one of the candidates would be Armando Jaramillo, at the time Minister of Interior in the cabinet. It was reported that Ibáñez would not accept Jaramillo's candidacy.⁴¹ Jaramillo said that rumors of his candidacy were unfounded, and announced that he would resign after the plebiscite was held, to give Alessandri complete liberty in choosing his cabinet.⁴²

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰El Mercurio, April 22, 1925, p. 19.

⁴¹Sáez, II, 20.

⁴²El Mercurio, April 25, 1925, p. 8.

Other rumors circulated that Alessandri and Ibáñez were feuding. At the same time political circles were discussing the possibility of a single candidate and some suggested a military candidate. On August 26 Ibáñez, one of the possible candidates, addressed a circular to the commanders of the army. He told his comrades that the major part of the revolution had been accomplished, but the most difficult and dangerous task lay ahead: returning the country to constitutional normalcy. Blaming the rumors of military political activity on the politicians, he said that the army must not have a candidate. With regard to his rumored candidacy, he ordered that his name was to remain out of all discussions. His only desire, he concluded, was to strengthen the discipline and efficiency of the army.⁴³

The rumors of a rift between Alessandri and Ibáñez continued, nevertheless, and not without foundation. Prior to his issuing the circular to the commanders, Ibáñez had said that the presidential candidate must be above all an eminent person, and only as a last resort a military man. The candidate, he continued, would also have to guarantee the fulfillment of the revolution. If the candidate were from the military, he should come from the high ranks, he concluded.⁴⁴ Alessandri considered Ibáñez's declarations inopportune and not befitting a cabinet official.⁴⁵ In the

⁴³El Mercurio, August 27, 1925, p. 8.

⁴⁴Sáez, II, 21.

⁴⁵Ibid.

middle of August an incident between Alessandri and Ibáñez was solved only by the intervention of outside aid. Ibáñez, nevertheless, clung to his cabinet position.

Rumors continued to circulate, notwithstanding the statements of Ibáñez. Navarrette and Ibáñez were reportedly differing. Colonel Bartolomé Blanche, in Paris, was reported to have been sent abroad because of his pro-Alessandri views. Ibáñez denied all these accusations.⁴⁶

The following day Jaramillo resigned from the cabinet, discrediting reports that he had been using his cabinet position to forward his presidential candidacy. He resigned to suppress these rumors and to give Alessandri complete liberty in organizing his ministry. Alessandri accepted the resignation.⁴⁷ Ibáñez remained in the new cabinet.

The idea of having a single convention to select a presidential candidate had been proposed previously, and in early September had found general acceptance by the parties. The problem, however, was in allotting delegates for each party. Each party president had a different idea. The Minister of Interior attempted to mediate, but the parties were adamant in their demands. El Mercurio, before the threatened fracas of the united convention, reminded the politicians that "The country doesn't desire today a President of party A or party B, of the combination this or that, but one with a

⁴⁶El Mercurio, August 27, 1925, p. 11.

⁴⁷El Mercurio, August 28, 1925, p. 8.

mandate that will be capable of consolidating the activity of all healthful elements of the country."⁴⁸ The editorial went unheeded as the politicians continued their polemics and refused to compromise.

The seriousness of the situation became apparent as a commission of naval officers arrived in Santiago. The visit would have appeared normal during other times, but the fact of the electoral problem and the absence of Alessandri and the Minister of the Navy from Santiago, could not go unnoticed. The naval officers met with Ibáñez for an hour. Officially, it was announced by Ibáñez that the meeting was held only in order to obtain harmony in the modernization plans of the army and navy.⁴⁹

The political parties continued their negotiations, apparently unconscious of the significance of the Ibáñez-navy meeting or of other incidents that occurred. Ibáñez and other leaders of the army issued statements ordering army members not to mix in politics. He suggested several men who fulfilled the qualifications needed for the presidency, one being Emilio Bello Codesido,⁵⁰ but his suggestion was not accepted. Finally, in an attempt to reach a settlement the Minister of Interior, Madrones, and Ibáñez called a meeting of the presidents of the political parties.⁵¹ The

⁴⁸El Mercurio, September 15, 1925, p. 3.

⁴⁹El Mercurio, September 16, 1925, p. 8.

⁵⁰El Mercurio, September 27, 1925, p. 1.

⁵¹El Mercurio, September 29, 1925, p. 1.

Radical party proved to be a stumbling block to any agreement. The party had nominated Quezada as its candidate and refused to give its support to a proposed single candidate, unless the candidate was Quezada. The Minister of Interior announced that the meetings had failed, and the situation remained unchanged.⁵²

With the failure of this attempt of Madrones and Ibañez, all awaited the next move. Ibañez now made his play. Several days earlier a petition had been given to him, signed by many respectable citizens, who pledged their support to him, urging him to declare his candidacy for president. Ibañez announced that he would comply with this request.⁵³

The Minister of Interior quickly called a cabinet meeting to consider Ibañez's acceptance. After a discussion of the situation the ministers, with the exception of Ibañez,

⁵²El Mercurio, September 30, 1925, p. 1.

⁵³El Mercurio, October 1, 1925, p. 9. Ibañez's reply was in the following terms. "I have cooperated with my most loyal and decided good will in order to produce an understanding so that the political parties could find a candidate for the Presidency of the Republic, who, in the first place, would unite all Chileans in a patriotic and lasting union.

In the face of ruin of such aspiration and believing myself without right to elude responsibility that since the first day of the revolution I have seen falling upon my shoulders, I accept the spontaneous offer of the forces of the nation, moved so only by the desire of defending and forwarding the democratic work of the two revolutionary actions that obeyed the highest ardent desire of national regeneration.

A program clear and defined, social justice, energetic action, visible procedures, stimulus for the useful initiatives and severe punishment for all culprits, this we need and this we will be able to reach if the good Chileans triumph in their aspirations and give me their disinterested cooperation." Ibid.

voted to resign. Alessandri, meeting with the cabinet, asked Ibañez for his resignation and reminded him that Jaramillo had been forced to resign because of rumored presidential aspirations. Ibañez's aspirations were not rumored. He had declared his acceptance publicly. Ibañez agreed to resign that same afternoon.⁵⁴ His resignation did not arrive, however.

The following day there appeared in the press an open letter from Ibañez to Alessandri. Ibañez announced his refusal to resign from the cabinet. In the first place, Ibañez said Alessandri's request was not based on any constitutional or legal basis, and he could not be reprimanded for his behavior in the cabinet. Consequently, Ibañez felt there was no incompatibility in being a cabinet minister and candidate. There were other reasons, he continued. He was the chief of the revolution and had to continue the struggle to protect the program. Secondly, he had to maintain the order and discipline of the army.

For the reasons I expressed, I must express to Your Excellency, that I will not now leave the post in the face of the necessity of defending public order, the need for unity in the ranks, and the purity of the revolution, in order to be able to carry out to the end, the program that the honor of the armed forces has promised.⁵⁵

The battlelines were drawn very concisely: Alessandri or Ibañez.

⁵⁴ Saez, II, 26.

⁵⁵ El Mercurio, October 1, 1925, p. 1.

The Radical Assembly of Santiago spoke out for Alessandri, approving a motion that censured any minister who remained in the cabinet while a candidate for political office.⁵⁶ The ministers released their official statement of resignation, announcing that they had resigned so as not to give the impression they were supporting Ibañez.⁵⁷

Alessandri, victim of these maneuvers, found himself helpless. On October 1 he resigned, appointing Luis Barros Borgoño as vice president. The date should be marked as one of the ironic dates of Chilean history. First, Alessandri resigned, appointing as his successor Barros B., who had been his opponent in the 1920 election. Secondly, the Constitution, having been proclaimed as law only a few days previously and having been drafted with the approval of the military, was subverted by that very organization. The Constitution established the principle that the president alone had the right to name his ministers, but Ibañez flaunted this principle when he refused to resign. Thirdly, Ibañez spoke of legality and of the revolution, but he had remarked previously that the aspirations of the revolution had nearly been fulfilled. The Junta of September, 1924, was overthrown to restore the legal president, but the legal president was overthrown by a "blow more audacious" than that of January 23.⁵⁸ Lastly, after all of Ibañez's statements

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 1.

⁵⁸ Sáez, II, 27.

that he would not be a presidential candidate and would not allow his name to be entered into political discussions, he placed himself in the center of the political arena.

In any case Ibáñez won the first round in the battle as Alessandri left the Moneda for the second time within a year. In a letter to Barros Borgoño, Alessandri explained his reasons for resigning. During the cabinet meeting of September 30, he had asked Ibáñez for a list of men who qualified to be appointed Minister of War. Ibáñez supplied the list together with the promise of his resignation. That evening Alessandri extended the nomination to Colonel Vélez. Ibáñez did not attend the meeting, saying he needed rest. The next day, October 1, Alessandri received the note from Ibáñez which was published in all the papers. He resigned since he had done all he could do. No other road was left open for him.⁵⁹

Barros Borgoño quickly formed a cabinet, headed by Manuel Vélez as minister of interior.⁶⁰ Political circles were awakened to the danger that faced them and renewed efforts to find a suitable candidate. The Radicals were released from the commitment to Quezada as he announced his withdrawal from the race. Before this notice, the presidents of the political parties finally agreed to vote on a list, eliminating those names which received the least votes. After

⁵⁹El Mercurio, October 2, 1925, p. 1.

⁶⁰El Mercurio, October 3, 1925, p. 1.

six ballots Emiliano Figueroa was chosen.⁶¹ At the same time a proletariat class group nominated Dr. José S. Salas, who at the time was serving as minister of health and social welfare.⁶² Thus, within three days of Alessandri's resignation there were three candidates for the presidency: Ibáñez, Figueroa, and Salas.

The political situation, by no means calm, cleared as rumors circulated that Ibáñez would withdraw from the race. An attempted military coup, however, caught everyone off guard. Actually, the coup had little chance for success as it was simply an attempt to persuade two regiments to march on the Moneda and restore the Alessandri government. Ibáñez immediately instituted proceedings against the rebels.⁶³

The following day Ibáñez announced that he was withdrawing from the race.⁶⁴ Sáez remarked that Ibáñez's withdrawal was based on conditions not mentioned in his resignation

⁶¹El Mercurio, October 5, 1925, p. 1.

⁶²Ibid. "The candidacy of Doctor Salas had a curious aspect. Ibáñez desired to avoid the struggle for the presidency, and he had asked the parties to agree on a personality capable of uniting all forces. This person named, a member of the army, Salas was a military doctor, accepted the candidacy that would provoke a struggle, and that made one doubt the sincerity of the statements of the Minister of War. The incentive of this candidacy, according to General Lavarréte, had come from the group of officers who supported all the movements of Colonel Ibáñez. Doctor Salas had at first resisted, saying the time was too short to prepare for his campaign. He offered Colonel Ibáñez the aid of his own partisans. But, the attitude of the navy forced a change of plans." Sáez, II, 33-34.

⁶³El Mercurio, October 5, 1925, p. 1.

⁶⁴El Mercurio, October 7, 1925, p. 1.

letter. The Director General of the Navy, Admiral Schroeders, had come to Santiago and had met with the Inspector General of the Army, Navarette. Schroeders relayed the navy's disapproval of a military candidate and specifically that of Ibáñez. Navarette had already publicized his opposition to a military candidate, and both chiefs decided to confront Ibáñez. After a discussion of the situation Ibáñez agreed to ask the political parties once again to attempt to find a single candidate. The result was the selection of Figueroa.⁶⁴ The navy announced its approval of Figueroa,⁶⁵ as soon as his candidacy was made public and before Ibáñez's withdrawal message appeared in the press.

Ibáñez, nevertheless, retained his cabinet post. The following day, October 7, political circles were stunned to hear that Ibáñez was asking the government for a postponement of elections. Ibáñez, in an interview with the press, said Figueroa's selection was calculated to calm the situation, but on the contrary some politicians had remarked that the selection was a joke for the revolution. Postponement of the elections, he concluded, would allow the political situation to calm and the political parties to reorganize.⁶⁶ His proposal, however, found little favorable response. Some asked that Ibáñez be removed from the cabinet. The navy

⁶⁴El Mercurio, October 7, 1925, p. 1.

⁶⁵Sáez, II, 28-31.

⁶⁶El Mercurio, October 6, 1925, p. 4.

announced that it was opposed to postponement of the elections, as it was necessary to return the government to normalcy.⁶⁷ The government announced that elections would be held as scheduled.

It would appear that Ibáñez's fortunes were at the lowest point since the dissolution of the Junta Militar in December, 1924. He had been forced to withdraw as a candidate from the presidency, elections were to be held as scheduled, and some voices were calling for his removal from the cabinet. In a few days, however, he was to appear the victor once again.

On October 16 a segment of the military attempted to enforce the demand that he leave the cabinet. A petition had been circulated among the officers of the Regiments Pudeto and Tucapel that referred to the permanency of the army in the government. The petitioners asked that some regiments be returned to their garrisons, in reference to the regiments of cavalry brought to Santiago by the government and reportedly loyal to Ibáñez, the retirement of certain chiefs and the resignation of Ibáñez.⁶⁸ The petition was given to Navarrete and he relayed it to Ibáñez. Rumors spread that the two regiments were planning to march on the capital to enforce their demands. Ibáñez ordered the troops from the school of infantry to guard the Moneda. Two companies of the Regiment

⁶⁷ La Nación, October 9, 1925, p. 4.

⁶⁸ Sáez, II, 35.

Pudeto appeared at mid-day, October 17, to take their accustomed positions as guards of the Moneda. They found, however, that the Infantry School had taken charge of the guard duties and the companies were forced to return to their barracks.⁶⁹ Ibañez appointed a new commander for the regiment and expelled various officers from the service.⁷⁰

Ibañez explained his actions in a circular. He called the petition from the regiments, "an attempt against discipline . . . a true crime against the country." The petition was the product of political maneuvering, he remarked. In spite of it the government would maintain the discipline of the army at all costs and punish all attempts at rebellion or sedition. He concluded by announcing that he would remain in the cabinet "as long as I can count on the confidence of the government and until the discipline of the armed forces is totally re-established."⁷¹ The country, tired of the attempted military coups, agreed, and Ibañez remained in the cabinet.

Figuerola easily won the election October 25, 1925. The partisans of Dr. Salas paraded in Santiago, protesting the election, asking that it be nullified. Fears were raised that a possible coup would be attempted.⁷² The government

⁶⁹El Mercurio, October 18, 1925, p. 1.

⁷⁰El Mercurio, October 20, 1925, p. 26.

⁷¹La Nación, October 18, 1925, p. 26.

⁷²Sáez, II, 36.

ordered a curfew on public gatherings and declared a state of seige in the provinces of Santiago, Valparaíso, and Aconcagua.⁷³

Ibañez now "considered that the moment had arrived to present his resignation. Un doubtedly, this wasn't an oportune moment; it could not be accepted."⁷⁴ He announced that his action was in accord with his promise of resigning when the presidential crisis had been resolved and order re-established. The cabinet met and refused to accept his resignation as "his presence in the Government is the most solid guarantee of public order and of the discipline of the army."⁷⁵

Parliamentary elections were held in late November. Alessandri won a senate seat from Tarapacá-Antofagasta even though he did little campaigning.⁷⁶ In the army numerous promotions and retirements were announced. General Naverette resigned as Inspector General of the Army and his action produced comments in the press. El Mercurio asked the government to reject his resignation because capable and respected people were needed during the present circumstances.⁷⁷ The resignation was accepted, however, and Ibañez appointed

⁷³El Mercurio, October 28, 1925, p. 1.

⁷⁴Sáez, II, 36.

⁷⁵El Mercurio, October 30, 1925, p. 1.

⁷⁶El Mercurio, November 24, 1925, p. 1.

⁷⁷El Mercurio, November 3, 1925, p. 3.

General Juan E. Ortiz, former member of the January 23 Junta, to the position.⁷⁸

Figueroa assumed the presidency in the latter part of December, 1925. His first cabinet was announced, and Ibañez was retained as minister of war.⁷⁹ The new President faced a bleak future. The nation's finances were in shambles with nearly 30 per cent of the total budget destined to service the public debt.⁸⁰ He had the problems of restoring civilian leadership in the government, enforcing the new constitution, and solving the long-standing problem of Tacna-Arica. But his most frustrating task would be facing Ibañez, counteracting the political power and the military sympathy Ibañez could rely upon. He had a popular following, especially in independent political groups, as he seemed to be the only person capable of giving energetic and dynamic leadership to the nation. The electorate, nevertheless, had given Figueroa a mandate and the political parties were willing to aid him. The question was, would Ibañez also cooperate?

⁷⁸El Mercurio, November 12, 1925, p. 3.

⁷⁹El Mercurio, December 22, 1925, p. 1.

⁸⁰La Nación, December 23, 1925, p. 9.

CHAPTER III

FIGUEROA AND IBÁÑEZ

The presidency of Figueroa was proclaimed as the triumph of civil rule over militarism. Hopes were held that the government would be able to solve the problems of the country and, at the same time, cement civilian control of the state. Figueroa could not fulfill these desires single-handedly; the public, the politicians, and the military had to cooperate with him.

The politicians, however, while not withdrawing their aid from Figueroa, concerned themselves with other matters, forgetting national problems. Congress debated the military revolutions and blamed them as being the real cause of the situation. It appeared to many that the Congress of September, 1924, had returned without having learned anything.

In the middle of October an incident occurred which produced a delicate situation. A deputy, discussing the past military revolutions, remarked that the real goal of the movements had been to assault the treasury.¹ An army officer demanded an explanation. Other deputies in the Chamber protested this demand, as article 32 of the Constitution

¹Carlos Morales Sáez, Recuerdos de un soldado, Vol. II: Genesis y derrumbe de la dictadura (Santiago: Editorial Ercilla, 1933), p. 47.

protected legislators from responsibility for opinions expressed while fulfilling duties in Congress. Deputy Rojas Mery introduced a motion to punish the offending lieutenant for violation of the penal code.²

In the following session a modification to the Rojas Mery motion was presented that, if approved, would have censured the action of the lieutenant involved in the incident.³ The modification was defeated 22-39, but Rojas Mery's proposal was passed 40-38.⁴

Ibáñez visited the Chamber the following day, October 20. He was granted permission to speak. "I do not imagine . . . that the scope of these legal dispositions (the parliamentary fuero or immunity) authorizes the honorable deputies, without control of any kind, to rage in a violent and cowardly form against someone else's honor."⁵ Having said this, he was interrupted by various deputies who asked the President of the Chamber to call him to order. Rafael Gumucio, the President, asked Ibáñez to withdraw the expressions.⁶ He refused and remarked, "Each time in the Chamber when the Minister of War or the army has been insulted, Your Excellency has not asked the words to be

²El Diario Ilustrado, October 16, 1926, p. 9.

³El Diario Ilustrado, October 19, 1926, p. 9.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Sáez, II, 49.

⁶El Diario Ilustrado, October 21, 1926, p. 9.

withdrawn."⁷ Further protests were shouted by the deputies, and Ibáñez stalked out of the Chamber.

The text of the Minister of War's speech was released to the press, as he had not been able to finish it. It proved to be a scathing indictment of the Chamber of Deputies. He accused the politicians of not having learned anything as the congressional practices which had caused the overthrow of parliament two years previously had reappeared. He warned Congress that people already were beginning to see that the political parties had again failed to provide intelligent leadership. They thought of national problems only in terms of their own selfish advantage. The moment could not be more dangerous as the people were being pushed to revolutionary extremism. Ibáñez accused the political parties of not understanding national problems, as demonstrated by their unjust attacks on the army. This revealed:

. . . that the Deputies have not realized that all constitutional order rests exclusively on the armed institutions. . . . The Minister of War declares, in name of His Excellency the President of the republic, that the government cannot look with indifference when the principal focus of conspiracy against the state is centered in this enclosure; for one part, you abuse parliamentary immunity to incite from public tribunals the proletariat to revolt and, on another part, all progress is hindered by the group of anarchist parliament members to which I have referred. . . .⁸

The following day Gumucio attacked Ibáñez's speech, calling it an offense and threat to the national Congress.

⁷Sáez, II, 49.

⁸El Diario Ilustrado, October 21, 1926, p. 9.

The Chamber does not count upon material elements to defend itself.

But, meanwhile force does not oppress it; it will maintain its authority, independence and dignity.

At this moment, the Minister of War remains at his post, without the Chamber having received sufficient satisfaction.

The Chamber is not able to accept this situation.

We do not want to aggravate a conflict and we desire patriotically to resolve it.

For today I propose, then, as a sign of protest, that the session be adjourned.⁹

Gumucio's remarks were greeted with "noisy and enthusiastic" applause from the floor and galleries. The session was adjourned with "vivas" to public liberties and parliament and "abajos" to the dictatorship.¹⁰

Once again Ibáñez's future appeared dim, but in the long run his defense of the armed forces cemented many officers to his cause. The army saw Ibáñez as the man who would sacrifice his own career in defense of his comrades.

The Chamber remained recessed until satisfaction was given to it by the government. Finally, the Chamber released a statement, disavowing all intentions of insulting the army, ". . . a national institution that merits the consideration of all Chileans."¹¹ Ibáñez expressed his satisfaction with the Chamber's statement and withdrew the remarks in his speech "that had injured the dignity of this honorable corporation."¹²

Parliament and Ibáñez had declared an uneasy truce,

⁹ El Diario Ilustrado, October 21, 1926, p. 9.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Saez, II, 50.

¹² Ibid.

but it was soon broken by certain members of the parliament who continued to denounce the army and Ibáñez. Ibáñez, biding his time, launched a new offensive in the middle of November, this time aimed at his colleagues in the cabinet. The crisis was announced with headlines in El Mercurio, "The Minister of War feels that the ministry ought to resign."¹³ Ibáñez, in an interview with the press, explained the reasons which had prompted his statement. Fifteen or twenty days ago, Ibáñez related, "Wishing to comply with a patriotic duty, I approached His Excellency to explain to him loyally and plainly my thoughts concerning the delicate political situation which was developing some time beforehand." The causes of the situation, he continued, lay in the disorganization of some political parties, the disorder and indiscipline of Congress, the unconcern of the cabinet with solving the problems of the country, and the unadaptability of the new political regime established by the Constitution. He expressed these opinions in the cabinet meeting. Ibáñez, during the course of the interview, released a letter that he had written to Maximiliano Ibáñez, the Minister of Interior, in December, 1925. In the letter Ibáñez indicated his ideas on what the future cabinet should be. He called for a liberal, revolutionary, and moral cabinet. Its members could not be anti-military. The cabinet would have to realize that because of the approval of the Constitution,

¹³El Mercurio, November 16, 1926, p. 1.

130,000 men wanted strong government, authority, and true social justice for all Chileans. Asked about discontent in the army, Ibáñez replied that communist and anarchist elements had used propaganda destined to subvert the discipline of the army. His solution for the situation was simple; a strong ministry, nonpolitical, and standing for order.¹⁴ Questioned on his action in the cabinet meeting, he said:

I have not even asked it (its resignation) because I do not have the right to do it. I limited myself to analyzing the political situation that, as I have said, each day grows dimmer, and to suggest the convenience for the present ministry to present its resignation, for the reasons that I have expressed.¹⁵

During the succeeding cabinet meeting the statements of Ibáñez were discussed. Maximiliano Ibáñez proposed that all resign, including the Minister of War, in order to give the President a free hand. The Minister of War reportedly opposed the proposal as "technical" ministers, such as the ministers of war and navy, were not to be affected and furthermore, he had to remain to maintain the discipline of the army. The Minister of the Navy, Admiral Swett, announced he would resign, however, but not until the Minister of War placed his signature on a resignation document before or at the same time he did.¹⁶

The entire cabinet resigned, nevertheless, Admiral Swett included, and without the signature of Ibáñez. The

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵El Diario Ilustrado, November 17, 1926, p. 11.

¹⁶Ibid.

same day Ibáñez announced his "irrevocable" resignation in a separate release. Figueroa immediately began the search for a new cabinet. He first gave Anibal Letelier the task of forming a ministry. The Radicals were contacted and announced if Ibáñez were included in the new cabinet, the party would not form part of it, but that did not mean the party would withdraw its support from the government.¹⁷ A persistent rumor circulated that a military agreement had been reached which would reimpose Ibáñez, but due to the nature of his resignation statement, many discounted the rumor. Furthermore, Ibáñez had sent a circular to all military commanders in which he reiterated his desire to leave the government.¹⁸

The rumors, however, appeared to be true as the cabinet crisis was prolonged. The problem was filling the post of minister of war. The Inspector General of the Army, General Ortiz Vega, had called a meeting of all the generals and colonels of Santiago to ask them their opinion on what should be done if one of them should be offered the ministry. The officers voted that Ibáñez should continue in the cabinet, and each agreed that he would not accept the cabinet post. General Enrique Bravo opposed the agreement and argued the President had the right to organize the ministry in the way he saw fit, but his was the only dissenting voice.¹⁹

¹⁷El Diario Ilustrado, November 18, 1926, p. 10.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁹Sáez, II, 54.

The ministry, therefore, could not be formed without the inclusion of Ibáñez, although the politicians still searched for some other solution. The Liberal party announced that it would not form part of a ministry which contained Ibáñez, but the military agreement had already nullified the wishes of both the Radicals and Liberals.²⁰ Ibáñez held the key to success. Anibal Letelier announced, after conferring with Ibáñez, that he could not form a cabinet.²¹ The chiefs of the political parties were called to meet with Figueroa in an attempt to clarify their position before the rumored inclusion of Ibáñez in the cabinet. The Radicals were accused of giving conflicting statements regarding future policy. An emergency meeting of the Junta Central was called and a resolution was adopted, 39 to 6, which clarified the party's position. The party declared that "to assure the success of the government and the harmony of all public powers, the presently resigned cabinet be totally replaced."²²

The following day a cabinet appeared organized. Ibáñez was included. The proposed cabinet, headed by Ernesto Barros Jarpa, toppled as several of its members refused to serve.²³ The Conservative party, following the lead of the

²⁰El Diario Ilustrado, November 19, 1926, p. 1.

²¹El Diario Ilustrado, November 20, 1926, p. 14.

²²Ibid.

²³El Mercurio, November 20, 1926, p. 10.

Liberals and Radicals, announced that its members could not serve in any cabinet with Colonel Ibáñez, as the party considered "traitors to the republic all those men who in the company of some military men pretend to demolish the constitutional institutions of the country."²⁴

The political opposition to the Minister of War of the three largest parties was not enough. On November 21 the cabinet was announced and was headed by Manuel Rivas Vicuña. Ibáñez remained as the minister of war. Rivas Vicuña was a prominent deputy. His leadership of the cabinet was interpreted as an attempt to bridge the gap between Congress and the executive and reconcile their differences.

Throughout the cabinet crisis the Chamber had called on the President to choose civilians and form a cabinet of national salvation.²⁵ Criticism of Ibáñez had been widespread. The deputy, Carlos Contreras Labarca, called the action of the Minister of War "definitely political and partisan."²⁶ The Chamber selected a commission to meet with Figueroa in order to discover his true thoughts and desires. A permanent commission was also formed, with representatives of all the political parties, and it had the power to speak in the name of the Chamber. The committee that met with Figueroa reported that he had received a petition from the

²⁴El Diario Ilustrado, November 20, 1926, p. 15.

²⁵Chile, Cámara de diputados, Boletín de sesiones extraordinarias. 1926, I (Santiago: Imprenta Nacional, 1927), 1191.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 1887-1889.

military. The petition asked for the inclusion of Ibañez¹² in any future cabinet, the passage of specific laws, and the suspension of the special session of Congress for a certain period. Figueroa had told the committee he would not accept the closing of Congress.²⁷

The permanent committee of the Chamber resumed the offensive the following day. Ismael Edwards Matte delivered the report. He opened it by remarking that the cabinet crisis was due only to the statements of the Minister of War.

The Minister of War has made an analysis of the action of the cabinet in which he formed a part, and I, fellow deputies, think--and I am certain that with me the immense majority of the independent opinion of the country will think--that never has been seen a greater freedom to confess faults nor more vanity to aspire to place himself on a pedestal.²⁸

Speaking of the accusation of a lack of co-operation between the President and the Congress, Edwards Matte remarked:

I am certain that the Minister of War has not realized that perhaps he is the greatest obstacle to the loyal co-operation between the Executive and Parliament. I am certain that if by chance the Minister of War saw what is the true spirit that exists in this chamber, he would not say what he said in respect to the necessity of his remaining in the cabinet that His Excellency freely, without threats nor pressure, constitutionally must organize.²⁹

He continued his speech, criticizing the action of the army officers. Figueroa, he reported, offered the ministry of the navy to Admiral Schroeders and he accepted saying, "Above all, I must obey Your Excellency." But when Figueroa offered

²⁷ El Diario Ilustrado, November 20, 1926, p. 14.

²⁸ El Diario Ilustrado, November 21, 1926, p. 26.

²⁹ Ibid.

the ministry of war to General Ortiz Vega, the reply was different. He had to consult first with his comrades, after which he replied negatively. The navy was willing to co-operate but the army was not. Matte asked, "Perhaps there is only one man in its ranks?" This is not the case, he continued, as next to the Minister of War there is a group of men who are followers of his and who abusively annul the representation of the army.

The political parties, Matte remarked, also declared to the President that they would not co-operate with a ministry in which members of the previous cabinet were included. The cabinet was formed, nevertheless, with Ibañez. Its members, furthermore, were not all qualified for their posts, Edwards Matte maintained. In the case of an armed conflict the Minister of War could not represent the forces that constituted the defense of the republic, as he had the enmity of too many. Besides, the armed forces seemed to believe that discipline was only certain if Ibañez remained in the cabinet. Matte challenged this view, remarking that in a modern army no one man could be indispensable, and that there were a number of other men who could fulfill the post of minister of war. Concluding his remarks, Matte reminded the deputies that the hour was grave and all had to remain united. The permanent committee pledged its support to the President and would co-operate with him, but "tranquility and peace could only come when the President was recognized as President of the Republic, Generalissimo of the forces of sea

and land, who is free to designate his aids, the Secretaries of State."³⁰

Edwards Matte's speech was widely circulated. In no uncertain words the Chamber had expressed its feeling. The presence of Rivas Vicuña in the cabinet did not serve to pacify the Chamber, for as long as Ibáñez remained in the cabinet, nothing would mollify it.

Several days later the announcement that General Enrique Bravo had presented his resignation from the army appeared. The news produced another outburst in the Chamber. His opposition to Ibáñez's ambitions was widely known and his vote during the military meeting had been publicized. Ismael Edwards Matte lamented Bravo's resignation and remarked,

I see with patriotic apprehension that General Bravo is being eliminated, not because he does not serve national defense, but because he is stubborn, he does not possess all the courtesan qualities to win over the full esteem that the present circumstances require in order to be acceptable to the Minister of War.³¹

Juan Antonio Ríos, explaining the motives behind Ibáñez's move, disclosed that Bravo's vote in the military meeting had caused the Minister of War to ask for his resignation. In the meeting, Ríos said, Bravo had remarked that for the tranquility and the well-being of the country Ibáñez should leave the cabinet. After the meeting, Ríos continued, Ibáñez had called Bravo and asked him to repeat his remarks. Bravo did

³⁰Ibid.

³¹El Diario Ilustrado, November 23, 1926, p. 10.

and Ibáñez asked for his resignation. "In this way loyalty and frankness is rewarded," Ríos remarked. He ended by expressing his feeling that no Chilean could say we lived in a free country. "We have been converted into slaves, living under the bayonets of Colonel Ibáñez."³²

The administration remained paralyzed. Congress was openly hostile and refused to co-operate with it. At the same time conditions in the country went from bad to worse. A general strike of railroad workers was announced, although the stoppage was not widespread.³³ In the Estación Alameda an incident developed when a group of workers attempted to stop a train load of strike-breakers, who were destined to replace striking workers in stations farther south. Carabineros, stationed at the railway station, tried to break up the demonstration. Contreras Labarca, a Communist deputy, spoke to the workers and urged them to continue impeding the train from leaving. A scuffle resulted in which Labarca was struck on the head by the saber of one of the carabineros. Parliament protested the attack.³⁴

The strike was only an indication of the discontent in the country. Congress and the President did not provide leadership or authority. There was one man, however, who stood for everything the government had failed to do: Ibáñez.

³²Ibid.

³³El Mercurio, January 18, 1927, p. 9.

³⁴El Mercurio, January 20, 1927, p. 11.

He asked for leadership, authority, and a strong government. In regard to the communist and extremist movements, his views were well known. Ibáñez would now play his trump card.

Manuel Rivas Vicuña explained the incidents which led up to the crisis in a series of articles published after his cabinet had fallen. Rivas reported that he had always acted on the theory that a successful cabinet rested on two bases; harmony between the executive and legislative powers, and unity and discipline of the armed forces. Ibáñez was charged with insuring that the second basis was stable. Rivas consulted nearly every day with Ibáñez in order to keep abreast of any occurrences in the ranks, but "I always got the same reply. These rumors of trouble were the work of the politicians. The army dedicated itself to its professional labors. We are working well."³⁵ Ibáñez left for Concepción, to attend a troop concentration, and Rivas again consulted with him because rumors of a coup circulated. Ibáñez assured him there was no cause to worry. On February 6 Rivas received two documents, both written on stationery of the Minister of War. One document was signed by a captain, the other was a plan for the occupation of Valparaíso and indicated the names of admirals who would be seized and brought to Santiago. Rivas wrote to Figueroa saying he would confer with Ibáñez and ask for an explanation. The next day Rivas confronted him with the two documents so that he could take disciplinary action.

³⁵Manuel Rivas Vicuña, "La crisis," El Diario Ilustrado, February 22, 1927, p. 9.

He again said there was no cause for concern, and told the President all was tranquil.³⁶

It was too late for Rivas to act when on February 8, El Diario Ilustrado published excerpts of a letter Ibáñez had written to a newspaperman in Concepción. Rivas met with Ibáñez prior to the scheduled cabinet meeting. For the first time Ibáñez spoke of the seriousness of the situation. He told Rivas that the navy needed reorganizing, reform of the educational system was necessary, communist papers and El Diario Ilustrado should be censured, and extraordinary powers should be demanded from Congress. Furthermore, Ibáñez continued, Congress should pass the laws referring to the navy within twenty-four hours and the Minister of the Navy must resign. Rivas realized that the rumors of a crisis had been true and were now going to produce a ministerial crisis. Ibáñez denied this; he repeated that the composition of the cabinet was satisfactory and, in any event, Rivas was not to resign. Rivas reminded Ibáñez that his action would cause the resignation of the ministry, as asking for the Minister of the Navy's resignation could only lead to a total cabinet crisis. The meeting ended and Rivas retired and drafted his resignation. Ibáñez met with President Figueroa and detailed the demands to him. The President, as a result, desired to resign. Rivas also met with the President and told him that he was leaving the cabinet. Figueroa expressed his desire

³⁶Ibid.

to resign to Rivas. Rivas, alarmed over the President's attitude, contacted Ibáñez and suggested that he become Minister of Interior and organize a new cabinet. Ibáñez refused, insisting that the present cabinet remain. The next day, February 9, Ibáñez's letter and manifesto were printed. Rivas called it, "A document designed to provoke the ministerial crisis already produced." Ibáñez conferred with Rivas prior to the cabinet meeting, still insisting that Rivas remain in the cabinet. Rivas, interrupting Ibáñez, called his explanations juvenile and said it was foolish to waste time, as the manifesto had been written with his knowledge and approval. The two men met with Figueroa and Ibáñez received authority to organize a ministry, he becoming Minister of Interior. The cabinet meeting was held and the cabinet resigned, but urged the President to remain at his post.³⁷

Rivas Vicuña gave the story of the inner conferences of the cabinet leading up to and through the fall of his cabinet. According to Rivas, Ibáñez's public declarations had precipitated the crisis. Rumors had circulated, as Rivas disclosed, of an impending crisis. El Diario Ilustrado had given substance to the rumor on February 8, with the announcement that it had a copy of a letter written by Ibáñez to a journalist of Concepción. The following day, the paper promised it would print the complete text of the letter. The letter stated:

³⁷Ibid.

Santiago, 2 February 1927.--Señor M. J. Escobar.--
Concepción.--Señor:

I have the special pleasure of congratulating you very cordially for your interesting article published in La Patria of Concepción, titled "Civil Campaign" and which revealed for its author a clear concept of the present political situation of the country. As you affirmed with reason, theoretic political propaganda is not enough to carry to the public the conviction that patriotic work is being done. It is indispensably requisite to exhibit acts which conform practically to such an assertion, and as you note, the reality of our political world makes distant the hope of a betterment of our old and corrupt political and administrative practices.

The same symptoms of corruption and decadence that produced the overthrow of [19]24 reappear today with characteristics perhaps more accentuated. There exists a general disorganization, a lack of a goal in the business of the state, and, as a result, all classes of disruptive and anarchical fermentation develop.

What the country needs is a strengthening of Executive power, in whose resolutions must prevail norms of correction, of severity and of justice, and a maximum development of nationalistic sentiments that detests sterile and delaying action of the political parties, and that desires strong and resolute government to affront without vacillation and with absolute omission of all partisan interest the national problems.

The political parties, discredited by 30 years of orgy and neglect, far from rehabilitating themselves in the year of normality that just ended, have done nothing but consolidate and deepen in public consciousness their profound lack of prestige and their absolute impotency to make positive work of progress and national aggrandizement.³⁸

At the same time the public became alarmed because of the concentration of troops in Concón. Officially, the troops were involved in field maneuvers, but, unofficially there were indications that the maneuvers had another significance. Ibáñez was reported to have cancelled a trip to Linares with the Minister of Communications and Public Works

³⁸El Diario Ilustrado, February 9, 1927, p. 1.

in order to make a "hasty" trip to the troop concentration.³⁹ Furthermore, the troops of the garrison of Valparaíso were withdrawn from Concón and ordered to return to their barracks. Ibáñez announced that the move was not to be interpreted as meaning a crisis was imminent.⁴⁰ Due to the series of conferences between Ibáñez, the president, and other cabinet members, the public did not remain convinced.

The situation cleared somewhat with the publication of the manifesto of Ibáñez. In the document he attacked the propaganda of the minority, saying it represented no positive value. He deplored the action of the Chamber when it rendered homage to a Communist deputy, referring to Contreras Labarca, as he had tried to trample freedom of work, incite the workers, and subvert public order. The army, Ibáñez continued, was being attacked by these very men who were agitating for the social revolution. It was all part of a methodical plan. Ibáñez announced that "complying with his patriotic duty," he had presented to the President a request for an immediate reform of the moral forces of Chile and a strong government to carry out the reform. This would be the work of all patriots, he continued, as co-operation from all was necessary to realize the reform. Personally, Ibáñez concluded, "I do not have aspirations; but I want the

³⁹El Mercurio, February 9, 1927, p. 8.

⁴⁰El Liario Ilustrado, February 9, 1927, p. 1.

greatness and the happiness of my country: the Patria above all things."⁴¹

This declaration produced the cabinet's resignation. Ibañez now had the opportunity to organize a cabinet and attempt to do what it had failed to do.⁴² He formed his cabinet in less than six hours,⁴³ and had the members sworn in the same day. Ibañez himself was Minister of Interior. The other members were Conrado Ríos Gallardo, Foreign Relations; Pablo Ramírez, Treasury; General Ortiz Vega, War; Captain of Frigate Carlos Frodden, Navy; Aquiles Vergara, Justice; Dr. José Santos Salas, Health; and Arturo Alemparte, Agriculture.⁴⁴

At the news of the coup, Congress protested. Matters were worsened when two deputies, Rodolfo Michels and Ramón Algamora, were detained because of their "crimes against the Government and the Minister of War."⁴⁵ Congress was silenced from further comment as Figueroa closed the special sessions. The regular session began in March,⁴⁶ but by then the situation had completely changed. Congress was much friendlier.

⁴¹El Mercurio, February 9, 1927, p. 8.

⁴²El Diario Ilustrado, February 10, 1927, p. 1.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴El Mercurio, February 10, 1927, p. 9.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶El Mercurio, February 10, 1927, p. 9.

Ibañez's immediate problem, however, was not with Congress but with the navy. The navy had been publicly opposed to military interference in politics and had been instrumental in defeating his presidential aspirations in 1925. He could count on little sympathy from the high command. There was only one thing left open for him; force those officers who were opposed to him to resign. Ibañez's plans were forwarded by his ambitious Minister of the Navy and by discontent among the young naval officers. Rivas had reported that the naval officers were rumored to have planned to revolt and seize their superiors and bring them to Santiago. A later rumor had the naval officers petitioning the government for a reorganization of the navy and the elimination of certain high officers. Ibanez confirmed the rumor.⁴⁷ The naval high command, however, declared the rumor was unfounded.⁴⁸ The following day a mass resignation of the high command of the navy was announced, reportedly due to the change of government and the supposed role of the young naval officers in the coup.⁴⁹ In any case, the navy was stripped of high officers, except for two rear admirals. It was a difficult problem to fill the posts of those who resigned because the younger officers did not have the necessary

⁴⁷El Mercurio, February 10, 1927, p. 9.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹El Mercurio, February 11, 1927, p. 9.

qualifications for promotion.⁵⁰ After the mass exodus of officers, however, the navy was pacified.

Ibáñez had one remaining problem, the politicians. The government, to silence its critics, adopted extraordinary powers. A series of arrests were announced. Manuel Rivas Vicuña was ordered out of the country and given twenty-four hours to comply with the order. Senator Manuel Hidalgo, top ranking communist, was arrested and the communist newspaper Justicia was closed.⁵¹ The following day other deputies were arrested and other politicians deported, notably Gustavo Ross and Ladislao Errázuriz. All were detained because of alleged crimes "against the internal security of the state."⁵² The deportations continued and were climaxed with the expulsion of Arturo Alessandri and his family.

Ibáñez had successfully silenced his major critics: Congress, the politicians, the navy, and was later to purge the courts and censor the press. La Nación was seized by the government and became its official newspaper. The speed with which Ibáñez moved caught his opponents off balance, and the hasty deportations removed those capable of organizing an effective opposition. He had played his hand well. After February, 1927, he was the strongest power in Chile and proceeded virtually unchecked.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹El Mercurio, February 24, 1927, p. 8.

⁵²El Mercurio, February 25, 1927, p. 9.

CHAPTER IV

THE IBÁÑEZ ADMINISTRATION

The rise of Ibáñez to power, at a first glance, seemed unexplainable, as the three largest political parties opposed him, the command of the navy called for a withdrawal of military influence from the government, and labor, largely controlled by Communist, Socialist, and Anarchist unions, declared its opposition to the self-appointed inquisitor. Ibáñez, however, had built an effective and loyal machine. He began his rise to national prominence while serving as Director of the School of Cavalry. He had taken part in the 1924 revolution, having been one of the authors of the petition presented to Alessandri. He had also been prominent in the Junta Militar and had impressed many of his comrades with his ideas and action. During the January, 1925, movement Ibáñez rose to national notoriety as he was the acknowledged leader of the coup. As a result he was appointed Minister of War. As minister, Ibáñez consolidated and extended the scattered sympathy he had in the army. Soon after the movement of January 23, Ibáñez was appointed Director of Carabineros, the rural police force. In his person was united the control of the carabineros and the armed

forces.¹ Ibáñez, as director, instituted a series of reforms in the corps of carabineros. He raised its pay and gave it the military fuero. The result was an effective militarization of the corp, and a powerful feeling of gratitude to its benefactor developed. Throughout his period of power the carabineros were to be among his most faithful friends. He always kept a large force of them in Santiago.²

In the regular army, too, Ibáñez had many adherents. Many of his fellow officers were ready collaborators: Lazo, Blanche, Grove. Secondly, the School of Infantry in San Bernardo, which was the best and largest fighting force in the army, was always headed by an officer friendly to Ibáñez. The forces of the school served as a counterbalance against other divisions opposed to Ibáñez.³ Thirdly, as Minister of War, Ibáñez held the key to success to every position in the army. Those who aided him were rewarded; those who opposed resigned. Divisions which were reportedly unfriendly to him were moved far from the capital or dissolved.⁴ Fourthly, Ibáñez kept in Santiago only forces that he knew were loyal. During the attempted revolt of the Regiment Pudeto, one of its demands had been the removal of these forces from the

¹Aquiles Vergara Vicuña, Ibáñez, césar criollo, I (Santiago: La Sud-América, 1931), 21.

²Ibid., p. 22.

³Ibid., p. 23.

⁴Ibid.

capital city. As he dominated the movement with the help of the San Bernardo school, the value of keeping friendly troops nearby was demonstrated. Lastly, in April, 1927, Ibáñez fused the police and carabineros. Another military force, well armed and superior in number to that of the army, was thus created, and he was its commander in chief.⁵

Ibáñez, therefore, with his power as Minister of War and Director General of Carabineros, together with his fellow military collaborators, had constructed an effective organization.

Nevertheless, Ibáñez could have not exerted the power he did with aid only from the military. As a cabinet minister Ibáñez held a certain amount of political power. He was able to use his resignation threat to force the government to do things he desired.⁶ The specter of military revolution seemed to be enough to frighten the government and it generally acceded to Ibáñez's requests. The President, at the same time, feared to attempt to remove him from the cabinet. Alessandri, in an article published after the overthrow of the Ibáñez regime, related that he had advised Figueroa to remove Ibáñez from his first cabinet. Figueroa feared to do this as Ibáñez seemed the only person capable

⁵Ibid., pp. 46-47.

⁶Ibid., p. 38.

of maintaining the discipline of the army.⁷ The President of the Conservative party, Arturo Lyon Pena, furthermore, advised Figueroa to keep him in the cabinet in order to prevent Alessandri from regaining the Moneda.⁸ Figueroa apparently was torn between these two alternatives. By the time he awoke to the danger that his Minister of War presented, it was too late. Ibáñez, therefore, was able to profit from the political chaos and use his military power as a threat against Alessandri and later Figueroa.

Politically, Ibáñez appealed to a cross section of opinion and instead of depending upon support from one particular party, overrode party lines to garner support from prominent politicians and independents. There was no organized Ibañista party. The Demócratas were accused of aiding Ibáñez in the organization of cabinets, but the entire party never supported him. The Radical party also did not support him, but individually some prominent radicals gave him their aid. One convert to the Ibañista cause was Ismael Edwards Matte, Liberal deputy and former outspoken critic of the Minister of War. He suddenly announced his decision to aid Ibáñez in the campaign of "Chile for the good Chileans."⁹ Edwards' turnabout appeared strange, but it accented the

⁷Arturo Alessandri, "Historia verdadera y necesaria," El Diario Ilustrado, August 20, 1931, p. 4.

⁸Ibid.

⁹El Mercurio, February 10, 1927, p. 15.

appeal of Ibáñez. He represented strong government, reforms, a new life for the people. Figueroa had been elected as a champion of these ideals, but had failed to realize them. Ibáñez offered hope to those men who felt that Chile could be reformed only with a strong and authoritarian government. Ibáñez, furthermore, ably used the issue of communism in appealing to the middle and upper classes. The unsuccessful general strike called by the railway workers had frightened moderate and rightist groups. Ibáñez appointed himself the "witch hunter" to root out the red menace. At the same time, Ibáñez preached political, economic, and industrial nationalism. He hoped to form a new Chile, a new national mentality stressing sobriety, honesty, austerity, and economy.¹⁰ Chileans could hardly oppose his program without being called unpatriotic. The slogan Ibáñez coined, "Chile for the good Chileans," summed up the appeal he had among all sectors.

The Ibáñez coup of February, 1927, had been successful. He was one step away from the presidency. His program of national moral regeneration was inaugurated. Annoying politicians were deported, the press was censored, and the courts were purged of unfriendly judges. Figueroa, however, was still President, but in a short time he would leave the Moneda.

Figueroa had reportedly wanted to resign in February,

¹⁰El Mercurio, March 29, 1927, p. 8.

but he agreed to continue at his post at the insistence of the cabinet. Ibáñez was the real power in the government, nevertheless. Two months later Figueroa named Ibáñez vice president and requested permission to absent himself from the presidency for two months. He asked this permission for grave personal reasons, and it was granted him.¹¹ Carlos Frodden was appointed Minister of Interior. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, announcing the absence of Figueroa, reported that the President left so that the government would have absolute freedom to resolve certain problems, one being the Supreme Court conflict.¹²

One month later, due to ill health, Figueroa submitted his resignation,¹³ which was accepted by Congress, and new elections were scheduled for May 22. El Mercurio editorially lamented Figueroa's resignation, but it realized that when Congress accepted the resignation it meant that "the country wants and demands a strong government that respects and makes the people respect law."¹⁴

Only one candidate was probable, Carlos Ibáñez.

¹¹El Mercurio, April 8, 1927, p. 11.

¹²Ibid. The purging of the courts was an involved and length procedure. Figueroa undoubtedly had reserved opinions regarding Ibáñez's methods as his brother, Javier Figueroa, was Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

¹³El Mercurio, May 5, 1927, p. 5.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 3.

In a manifesto to the country he outlined his program. He would continue with the principle of authority in order to end anarchy, and if anarchical elements reappeared, he announced he would obtain from Congress the means necessary to combat them. The public treasury would be placed on a firm basis. Social laws would be strictly enforced. The youth would be educated scientifically, morally, physically, and the entire educational system would be organized in order to rid the country of illiteracy. The universities would become places of investigation and study. In foreign relations the principles of peace and friendship would underly all actions, but at the same time national dignity would be safeguarded. He would replace the egotistical concept of life with a spirit of social consciousness and citizen co-operation, each citizen to collaborate in national reconstruction. Finally, he pledged to govern for all citizens, without distinction of political hue, sect, or group.¹⁵

Ibáñez's candidacy found support in political circles. The Radicals, Demócratas, and Asalariados voted to aid his candidacy. The Conservative¹⁶ and Liberal¹⁷ parties voted liberty of action to their members, and did not officially endorse any candidate.

¹⁵El Mercurio, May 12, 1927, p. 9.

¹⁶El Mercurio, May 15, 1927, p. 34.

¹⁷El Mercurio, May 17, 1927, p. 21.

In the election Ibañez swept the country, obtaining 223,741 of the 231,372 votes cast.¹⁸ Eighty-two per cent of those registered voted. The shift in public opinion and Ibañez's subsequent landslide victory could be attributed to the appeal his program had to the electorate, as he offered a new approach to solve the national problems. Furthermore, the moderate and right wing parties were more prone to support Ibañez than the left wing candidate, Dr. Salas. The mandate Ibañez received, in any case, was overwhelming. He inaugurated his government with universal approval and sympathy.

The Ibañez administration from 1927 to 1931 proved to be one of the most controversial in Chilean history, subject to a variety of interpretations. Some called the regime a dictatorship; others called it an honest attempt to save the country. In reality it was both.

The government accomplished many of the things it had pledged itself to do. Order and discipline were restored. Roads, bridges, public buildings, schools, canals, prisons, and barracks were constructed. The Tacna-Arica controversy was settled and, consequently, Chilean relations with Peru and Bolivia improved. COSACH was created in order to solve the nitrate problem. The list was impressive. Nevertheless, critics claimed that all these projects were accomplished

¹⁸El Mercurio, June 24, 1927, p. 3.

at the expense of democratic liberties and with serious economic consequences.

In any case the Ibañez government was an accomplished fact and changed the history of the country. With regard to the armed forces, Ibañez did not forget his old comrades. Some writers claimed that the government was based on the armed forces, with their caudillo as the visible head of the state.¹⁹ Nevertheless, they continued, the regime was not maintained by the direct intervention of the armed forces, but by their passive approval of Ibañez. Their direct interests were involved because of the privileges and increased salaries given to them. "History will say that the armed forces of this epoch confused patriotism with the stomach. They are thus responsible for the tyranny."²⁰

The responsibility of the armed forces during this period was also commented upon by Alessandri in a speech in the Senate. He told his colleagues that his action toward the armed forces during his 1932-1938 term as president had been guided by the principle that the armed forces had faltered in their duties and had to be punished accordingly. Their responsibility lay in the fact that a military man who headed the government had violated the Constitution and the

¹⁹H. Ochoa Mena, La revolución de julio. La caída de la tiranía militar en Chile (Santiago: Imp. Cisneros, 1931), p. 11.

²⁰Ibid., p. 17.

law while the army, sworn to defend these principles, stood by and watched. "There are sins of commission and sins of omission and they have sinned by omission."²¹

Whatever the real situation, Ibáñez tended to the needs of the armed forces while he was president. The army was reorganized and modernized. Modern equipment and ammunition was acquired. Munition factories were enlarged. New barracks were built.²² The navy experienced a similar growth. New ships, six destroyers, three submarines, two oil tankers, five tugboats, and a transport ship were purchased.²³ Port facilities were modernized.²⁴ The air force was expanded. A national air line, Linea Aerea Nacional, was created. Air bases were built.²⁵ The salaries and benefits for the officers were increased at the same time. The carabineros, while not ostensibly a military group, enjoyed Ibáñez's favor. He had been the group's commander in chief and had aided its growth by the fusion of the carabineros with the police in 1927. The carabineros' pay was

²¹Chile, Senado, Diario de sesiones. Legislatura extraordinaria. 1948-1949. I (Santiago: La Nación, 1949), 370.

²²Benjamín E. Merino Carvallo, "El gobierno de Ibáñez," Hoy, V (December 11, 1935), 11.

²³José Miguel Varas, Ibáñez, el hombre, biografía-historia-crítica (Santiago: El Imparcial, 1953), p. 252.

²⁴Merino Carvallo, p. 11.

²⁵Varas, pp. 255-256.

subsequently raised and placed on a par with the army's, and they received good uniforms, equipment, and horses.²⁶

On the other hand, those military men who did not sympathize with him were sent discharge notices (sobres azules) or ordered to fill foreign posts. In retrospect, the entire army could not be blamed for creating and sustaining the Ibáñez regime. Many officers were lukewarm towards Ibáñez and only passively accepted his manipulations out of a feeling of esprit de corps.²⁷ The "military clan," as it was called, was able to advance into high positions in the service and gave an aura of universal military approval to the regime.

The military became the scapegoat as the cause of the Ibáñez dictatorship. Several figures reminded the country that responsibility also lay with ninety per cent of the citizens for "they applauded him as the savior of the country . . . they acclaimed him as the emulator of Balmaceda. . . ."28

In any case the Ibáñez regime was abruptly interrupted by the depression and its program was ruined. The government had based its program on deficit spending,

²⁶Víctor Contreras Guzmán, Bitácora de la dictadura. 1927-1931 (Santiago: Imprenta Cultural, 1942), p. 49.

²⁷Domingo Melfi, Dictadura y mansedumbre (Santiago: Imprenta Universitaria, 1931), p. 10.

²⁸Carlos Sáez Morales, Recuerdos de un soldado, Vol. III: El 29 de julio de 1931 al 24 de diciembre de 1932 (Santiago: Editorial Arcilla, 1934), p. 52.

contracting foreign loans to fill the empty treasury. When the depression first appeared in Europe and the United States, Ibáñez failed to curtail his program in the light of worsening world economic conditions. Perhaps he refused to because the regime could not have reduced its economic development program without losing public support. The positive gains of the regime, however, remained intact. "Time will pass," said General Sáez, "and all these works will be sufficient reason to understand then, that General Ibáñez, in spite of his errors, merits to figure in the gallery of our great presidents."²⁹

²⁹Carlos Sáez Morales, Recuerdos de un soldado, Vol. II: Génesis y derrumbe de la dictadura (Santiago: Editorial Ercilla, 1933), p. 151.

CHAPTER V

THE CIVILIAN RESTORATION

The beginning of the end of the Ibáñez regime can be traced to September, 1930, when the first reverberations of the depression hit Chile. Ibáñez had summoned the President of the Banco Central, Francisco Garcés Gana, for a conference and offered him a cabinet post. Garcés Gana accepted on the condition that civil liberties be restored, but Ibáñez refused the request.¹

Shortly afterwards the government realized its error. Economically, Chile was dependent upon the revenues from her exports of copper and nitrates. Prior to 1929 these products were in demand in world markets. Exports, consequently, were at a high level. Ibáñez had inaugurated a vast public works project, financed by national income and foreign loans. During the boom years of 1928 and 1929 foreign capital flowed freely into Chile, as foreign financiers saw the opportunities Chile offered. Railways, for example, had a great value, as national capital was relatively scarce. The foreign financiers, therefore, were eager to loan money for construction purposes. The government, furthermore, was willing to pay an

¹Jorge Münch, "Como se produjo la libertad en Chile," II, El Mercurio, October 12, 1932, p. 12.

interest rate of 10 per cent and to repay the loans with gold. As a result the gold reserves of the Banco Central were depleted. In normal times the amount of gold reserves was not important as long as the people had faith in the paper money. The crisis, however, caught Chile in the midst of her planned economic development program. Credit for Chileans had always been tight and as the depression worsened, debtors requested an extension of their credit. At the same time foreign investors withdrew their loans. The result was a drop in the volume of national business and a subsequent drop in exports.²

The government was reluctant to recognize the seriousness of the situation, and continued its economic program as planned. Sáez remarked, "The money lenders continued taking from us our gold and we maintained a style of life that was based on excessive spending and an increase of our imports, until the day that sales fell and we saw ourselves faced with a deficit."³ The government searched for foreign capital to reduce the deficit in the budget. Its hopes lay in France, but exiled Chileans, mainly in Paris, were able to use their influence to have the loan rejected.⁴

²Jorge Hübner, "La dictadura y la libertad en Chile," I, El Mercurio, October 2, 1931, p. 12.

³Carlos Sáez Morales, Recuerdos de un soldado, Vol. II: Genesis y derrumbe de la dictadura (Santiago: Editorial Arcilla, 1933), p. 148.

⁴Hübner, I, 12.

Early in 1931 Ibáñez asked several experts to study the economic situation and suggest methods to better it. After several weeks of work the committee, headed by Alberto Edwards, suggested to Ibáñez that men of proven ability in financial affairs be given cabinet positions, even though they might not be loyal Ibanistas. Edwards named Pedro Blanquier as a logical choice for minister of the treasury. Ibáñez, slowly being backed into a corner, finally agreed. Appointing Blanquier signified several things. It meant that the cabinet contained men who were not believers in the strong and repressive measures Ibáñez used to keep order. It could also mean the possible end of the "dictatorship."

Ibáñez was personally opposed to appointing the non-government men to his cabinet, as he did not want to make the concessions they would demand. His advisers, however, believed that if he appointed persons who had the public's confidence, the government might be saved.⁵ Even though their calculations proved to be incorrect, Ibáñez had little choice. Public dissatisfaction was increasing. While the government had been able to provide prosperity, order, and internal peace, people were willing to ignore the strong-arm methods of Ibáñez. When prosperity vanished, people grew restless. Ibáñez might try to continue the strong-arm tactics he had always used and sustain his regime without following Edward's recommendations, but the public discontent

⁵Ibid.

might have broken out into open opposition. Ibáñez, therefore, followed the advice of his advisers and appointed a new cabinet, hoping to placate public opinion without fully surrendering his authority.

The two most important appointees were Blanquier, as minister of the treasury, and Juan Esteban Montero, as minister of the interior. Montero made a conditional acceptance of his appointment, as Ibáñez had to agree first to reinstate civil liberties. Ibáñez agreed to this demand.⁶

Censorship was lifted from the press. El Mercurio, commenting on the new ministry, remarked that it represented a desire by the president to seek the best men and to solve the problems of the country. The cabinet, the paper continued, would give confidence to the people as it promised freedom and liberty.⁷ Apparently, Ibáñez's government was secure and the gamble suggested by his advisers had succeeded.

The lifting of censorship, however, meant that the government could not as easily silence its critics, who could not legally fan public discontent without fear of reprisals. The university students, long bitterly opposed to Ibáñez, had circulated propaganda against the government at various times. Students had been expelled from the school and sent to other areas in Chile, but the discontent was never

⁶ Raúl Marín Balmaceda, La caída de un régimen. Julio de 1931. (Santiago: Imp. Universitaria, 1933), p. 28.

⁷ El Mercurio, July 14, 1931, p. 3.

completely rooted out. With the re-establishment of civil liberties the students openly attacked the government.

The return of civil liberties was greeted with approval by the public. The government soon found out the depth of its unpopularity. The cabinet released, for the first time, a picture of the true financial situation of the country. The budgetary deficit would amount to 145,000,000 pesos and the reserves of the government were 85,000,000 pesos in the red.⁸ Previously, the government had denied the rumored financial difficulties, but with the publication of the figures, many realized the regime could not continue.⁹

The cabinet immediately proposed a series of measures designed to economize government expenditures. It proposed severing the relationship between the government and its newspaper, La Nación, in order to stop the subsidy given to the paper.¹⁰ A reduction in the number of public employees was proposed.¹¹ Montero proposed, to restore public confidence, the replacement of the Intendente of Santiago, the Chief of the Carabineros, and the Chief of the government's police force, as these men represented the repressive

⁸El Mercurio, July 18, 1931, p. 7.

⁹Enrique Molina, La revolución, los estudiantes y la democracia (Santiago: Imprenta Universitaria, 1931), p. 5.

¹⁰Marín Balmaceda, p. 33.

¹¹El Mercurio, July 22, 1931, p. 7.

arm of the government. Montero hoped also that replacement of these men would demonstrate the government's sincerity toward protecting civil rights.¹²

On all points the cabinet was rebuffed. Ibáñez refused to replace the three named officials as they were his loyal and personal friends.¹³ He rejected the announced economic reforms as they would gut his program of development. He refused to stop the subsidy to La Nación because, he reportedly said while defending his position, Mussolini had founded official organs of the government.¹⁴

The cabinet refused to serve if the president declined to cooperate with it. Resignation was the only resort left to it.¹⁵ A new ministry was formed that guaranteed the continuance of civil liberties and had suggested means to fight the depression, but Ibáñez had caused its demise by his refusal to co-operate. The press printed the reasons why the cabinet fell, and this only served to incite the public. Editorially El Mercurio lamented the resignation of the Montero cabinet and called for men who inspired confidence. The new cabinet, it continued, also appeared to understand the problems of the country.¹⁶

¹²Marín Balmaceda, p. 36.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁶El Mercurio, July 22, 1931, p. 3.

Crowds began to gather in the streets after news of the cabinet's resignation was known. The public feared that the new cabinet would withdraw guarantees of civil liberties, but the crowds were not mollified when the new cabinet announced that public rights would be protected. The man who inspired public confidence was Montero, but he had resigned. Several demonstrations were reported, but were broken up by the Carabineros.¹⁷

July 22 proved to be the lull before the storm, as Ibañez's government still appeared stable. The new cabinet seemed to be acceptable to the public in general. In the University of Chile the students held a meeting and approved a call for an indefinite strike as a protest against the government.¹⁸ Students from the Catholic University were divided with regard to the strike. A Guardia Cívica was also formed of 100 volunteers to defend and guard the university buildings.¹⁹

The following day the situation was reversed with the fall of the cabinet and the naming of a new ministry headed by Frodden. The resignation had apparently been caused by the government's desire to reinstate controls over the public. The cabinet, having agreed to function only if civil rights were guaranteed, resigned and announced that the

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸El Mercurio, July 23, 1931, p. 7.

¹⁹Ibid.

president could try to maintain order in his own manner. Frodden, the new Minister of Interior, issued orders to the carabineros to repress all public demonstrations.²⁰ Ibañez released a statement and explained the reasons why the first two cabinets fell. The Montero-Blanquier cabinet, he said, offered sporadic and impractical plans to solve the economic problems, and he rejected the plans as they would have destroyed the work of the revolution. The second cabinet, he continued, had guaranteed civil liberties, but as a result, disorder appeared. It resigned because of its inability to control the situation. Eleven days of liberty permitted the red flag to reappear in the streets of the capital. But, Ibañez concluded, "I will respond with my life, if necessary, so that the republic will enter soon on the prosperous road of economic and financial resurgence. . . ."21

The public did not accept the explanations of the President. Demonstrations continued and the student movement developed into an open revolt against the government. The Catholic University students adhered to the student strike. The Guardia Cívica occupied the university buildings and announced it would remain there indefinitely. Carabineros surrounded the University and broke up sympathy demonstrations. Numerous people were injured.²² In other sectors of Santiago

²⁰El Mercurio, July 24, 1931, p. 7.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., p. 12.

demonstrations formed and trolleys were attacked. Carabineros dissolved the demonstrations, but the people only regrouped in another sector. By midnight the city had quieted, but the mobs were only resting. The doctors of Santiago, during the day, had met and agreed to call a medical strike in sympathy with the students. They asked for a return of individual liberties.²³

The movement continued the next day, although the streets were deserted. The government named General Bartolomé Blanche as chief of all military forces in Santiago in order to co-ordinate action and keep public order. Mounted carabineros were placed in front of the University of Chile to break up demonstrations. Gunfire from the homes and buildings near the university forced the carabineros to retire, but they were able to return and reassert their control over the area. After a series of conferences the students agreed to leave the university buildings, for the situation appeared desperate. The government guaranteed that none would be arrested. Carabineros immediately took possession of the buildings.²⁴

Once again Ibañez appeared to have dominated the unrest. The students, however, left the university only to join the mobs. On July 25 mobs again appeared and clashed with the carabineros. Stores were closed and transportation

²³Ibid.

²⁴El Mercurio, July 25, 1931, p. 7.

was almost totally paralyzed. The funeral of Pinto Riesco, a student whose death was apparently caused by the carabineros while he was detained, was held and a huge crowd attended. Afterward, the crowd headed for the center of the city, where it clashed with the carabineros, and a stray bullet killed an innocent by-stander, Alberto Zanartu. The mob now had two martyrs. Throughout the day carabineros and the mobs clashed, and at night an uneasy calm fell over the city.²⁵ During the day the movement gained further adherents as professional men joined the doctors in declaring a sympathy strike. Lawyers, private employees, bank employees, pharmacists, dentists, teachers, and engineers joined the protest movement.²⁶

The following day rumors circulated that Ibáñez would announce his resignation. Crowds descended upon the Moneda, but troops prevented them from reaching it. The news was confirmed when the Senate was called to meet. Ibáñez asked for permission to leave the country, giving the title of vice president to Pedro Opazo Letelier, President of the Senate. Montero was called to form a cabinet.²⁷ In a release to the commanders of the country's army garrisons, Ibáñez's resignation was explained. "His Excellency the President of the republic in a gesture of love for Chile and desiring that

²⁵ El Mercurio, July 26, 1931, p. 4.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 14.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 15.

peace and concord return to the minds of the citizens, has decided to retire from the presidency."²⁸

When news of the resignation became official crowds flocked to the downtown area. Enthusiastic demonstrations erupted as Santiago appeared in a festive mood. Carabineros and army groups guarded prescribed areas, but they were ordered not to break up the parades unless the mobs attacked property. Later in the day the carabineros were withdrawn as the mobs focused their resentment on its members. A truck of the corp was burned and a free-for-all broke out in front of the club of the carabineros.²⁹

The regime of Ibañez had fallen. Opazo Letelier, the Vice President, delegated his powers to Montero. Montero, the idol of the mobs, called for elections within sixty days. The future of civilian government appeared bright as the armed forces were in disrepute because of their role during the Ibañez government. An immediate housecleaning began in political circles as all men suspected of co-operating with Ibañez were removed from party rosters. The exiles returned to the country and were welcomed by crowds.³⁰

The caretaker government, counting on unanimous sympathy, began the inventory of the legacy left to it by the Ibañez regime. La Nación was closed in an economy move.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ El Mercurio, July 27, 1931, p. 9.

³⁰ El Mercurio, August 1, 1931, p. 1.

Politicians called for an immediate dissolution of the Ibañez parliament. Figures of military expenditures were released. The future of the carabineros was discussed and some men urged its dissolution. The Socialist party called on the government to disavow all public debts contracted by Ibañez. A proposal was circulated urging the creation of a Ministry of National Defense, a new cabinet post, to be filled by a civilian.

The government was handicapped in dealing with any of these problems because most attention was centered on the forthcoming presidential election. The political parties met and tried to agree on a candidate. The Demócratas voted to give their support to Alessandri, but he refused the offer.³¹ Politics became the primary concern of all as a rash of new parties was created. Professional groups, one of the prime forces behind the revolution, organized, and in a convention proclaimed the candidacy of Juan Esteban Montero. The Conservatives, Liberals, and Radicals also voted to give him their aid.³² Montero accepted the offer and resigned from the government in order to campaign.³³ Manuel Trucco was named vice president.

The other major public concern was punishing those men connected with the Ibañez regime. Military officers

³¹El Mercurio, August 8, 1931, p. 7.

³²El Mercurio, August 16, 1931, pp. 26-27.

³³El Mercurio, August 20, 1931, p. 9.

were among the prime targets of the public's displeasure. The government announced that certain officers would be removed from the army because of their possible effect on the discipline of the corp.³⁴ The Minister of War, General Enrique Bravo, announced that further discharges would be forthcoming, after an investigation was completed, of those involved in the Ibañez government who could not explain their actions during the regime. Bravo declared that his only desire was to have the army regain its "old prestige as a fundamental institution of the state, loved and respected by all citizens and completely removed from the activities that are not of exclusive professional character."³⁵ Commander in Chief of the first division, General Pedro Vignola Cortes, called on the public to remember that all officers and troops were not involved in interfering with the course of civilian government. He placed the blame on some officers of the Santiago garrison.³⁶ Several officers were recommissioned by the government and appointed to high positions. General Indalicio Tellez, named Commander in Chief of the Army, and General Agustín Moreno, re-entered the army, both having been forced to leave in view of their "firm and resolute refusal not to accept the dictatorship."³⁷

³⁴El Mercurio, August 16, 1931, p. 29.

³⁵El Diario Ilustrado, August 18, 1931, p. 1.

³⁶El Mercurio, August 18, 1931, p. 13.

³⁷El Mercurio, August 26, 1931, p. 15.

Public wrath was also directed against civilians who had co-operated with Ibañez. In Congress a group of deputies formulated an accusation against Ibañez and many of his aides for arbitrarily detaining and exiling members of parliament.³⁸

The country, however, was rocked from its complacency with the news that a revolution had taken place in a squadron of ships anchored in Coquimbo. According to the first reports, the crews of the ships had surprised their officers, demanding that they sign a petition which was to be presented to the government. When the officers refused, they were imprisoned, and petty officers took command of the ships. The mutineers communicated with the government, demanding that it accept their demands within forty-eight hours.³⁹

The primary complaint of the mutineers was the announced lowering of the salaries of public employees. The government had been forced to this measure, as the treasury had insufficient funds to meet salaries. The government announced that it would pay salaries less than \$3000. pesos annually, but those over the figure would be cut and the amount cut would be paid at a later time.⁴⁰ The petitioners also asked for appropriation of funds to promote the industry

³⁸El Mercurio, August 19, 1931, p. 9.

³⁹El Mercurio, September 2, 1931, p. 1.

⁴⁰Almirante Edgardo von Schroeders, El delegado del gobierno y el motín de la escuadra (Santiago: Universo, 1933), p. 10.

and commerce of the Republic, a lowering of the interest rates, a division of the latifundos, free distribution of clothing, a continuance of public works projects, and an end to the campaign of defamation against the armed forces. The rebels maintained that their movement was non-political and non-communist.⁴¹ The remembrance of the role of the armed forces during the Ibañez regime was too fresh, however, and the public called on the government to adopt energetic measures to suppress the revolt.

The government replied to the rebels' petition by sending Admiral Edgardo von Schroeders to Coquimbo as mediator. The cabinet resigned in order to give Trucco complete liberty to deal with the revolt. He then picked a new ministry composed of men who he believed inspired public confidence.⁴² Von Schroeders had been given instructions to tell the rebels that the government did not intend to capitulate to their demands. He visited the ships, communicated the government's reply, and secured an hour prolongation of the ultimatum.⁴³

The main concern of the government was to keep the revolt localized and prevent its spreading to Valparaíso and Talcahuano, the other major naval stations. In Talcahuano, however, the crews also revolted, imprisoned their officers,

⁴¹El Mercurio, September 2, 1931, p. 1.

⁴²El Mercurio, September 3, 1931, p. 7.

⁴³Von Schroeders, p. 15.

and adhered to the Coquimbo movement.⁴⁴ In view of the Talcahuano revolt the government's hopes were dashed, but it mobilized in order to prevent the two movements from joining forces. Von Schroeders found his task increasingly difficult when news of the Talcahuano movement reached Coquimbo. His attempts at negotiation were hindered as he had to confer by telegraph concerning every new development.⁴⁵ The Coquimbo group was nearly ready to capitulate, but negotiations broke down over phraseology of an amnesty document. The government demanded the document be phrased in one way, the mutineers in another. Von Schroeders communicated the differences to the government, and in the process, too much time was lost and the revolt continued, almost by default.⁴⁶

The government prepared to defend itself by placing all national defense forces under the command of the Minister of War, General Carlos Vergara Montero. He was given the authority to reduce the rebels.⁴⁷ In the north it was reported that the rebels were going to bombard La Serena unless the city aided the revolution, but despite this threat the city remained loyal to the government. It was also reported that the rebels appeared disorganized.⁴⁸ That evening the

⁴⁴El Mercurio, September 4, 1931, p. 11.

⁴⁵Von Schroeders, p. 44.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷El Mercurio, September 5, 1931, p. 12.

⁴⁸El Mercurio, September 7, 1931, p. 1.

news came that the air force had attacked the rebels. All awaited the news that the revolt had ended.⁴⁹

The next day the expected news was officially released, as the Coquimbo movement collapsed. The action of the air force had demoralized the rebels and they surrendered, feeling their cause was hopeless.⁵⁰ The ships left Coquimbo as the surrender was to be effected in Valparaíso. This took place the following day.⁵¹ A tribunal of war was established in order to try the rebels. Sentences were pronounced and six of the rebels were sentenced to death.⁵²

The revolt of the navy crews was an unfortunate episode in the transitional period between the fall of the Ibáñez government and the inauguration of Montero. The revolt, however, gave the army and carabineros an opportunity to prove their loyalty to the government. The navy became the scapegoat of the public. As the high command of the navy was not involved in the revolt, public reaction was not prolonged or bitter. The air force was lauded for its role in snuffing out the revolt. The failure of the revolt apparently gave the air force a sense of importance and made it feel invincible.⁵³

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰El Mercurio, September 8, 1931, p. 1.

⁵¹El Mercurio, September 9, 1931, p. 7.

⁵²El Mercurio, September 18, 1931, p. 17.

⁵³Von Schroeders, p. 156.

As elections were approaching, the country's interest again turned to politics. In political circles comments increased over the possible candidacy of Alessandri. He had earlier declined to run, but the Demócratas persisted and announced that they would campaign for him in any case. Alessandri had addressed a letter to Montero, saying it might be better if both withdrew their names from consideration. Montero refused Alessandri's proposal, replying, "I find myself bound to the parties and the professional groups by a promise that they alone can relieve me from."⁵⁴ Eight days later, Alessandri accepted the candidacy offered to him at a massive public meeting in Plaza Italia. He revealed that he had wanted to avoid an electoral struggle as the country needed unity and not division, but he declared, "I am a man who divides the Chilean family less than others." He announced his program, calling for measures to fight the depression and pledging himself to dissolve COSACH, the nitrate monopoly created by Ibáñez.⁵⁵ The electoral campaign was brief, and the results were decisive. Montero, called by some the candidate of the women, received 183,000 votes to Alessandri's 100,000.⁵⁶ His victory was due to a coalition of the three largest parties, Radical, Conservative, and Liberal, and to his role in the July 26 movement. Furthermore, Alessandri

⁵⁴El Mercurio, September 12, 1931, p. 16.

⁵⁵El Mercurio, September 20, 1931, p. 18.

⁵⁶El Mercurio, October 5, 1931, p. 10.

was felt to be too radical, but the amount of votes that he polled surprised nearly everyone. The task of reconstructing the country was given to Montero, and civilian government appeared vindicated and assured.

The issues that the government had to face were explicit. First of all, some attempt to improve the economic situation was of primary importance. Coupled with this problem was a widespread feeling that COLACH should be dissolved before conditions would improve. Secondly, were political problems: punishment of those involved in the Ibáñez government, dissolution of Congress, and reorganization of the political parties. Thirdly, the government had to maintain order. This meant loyal and non-political co-operation on the part of the armed forces plus improving the conditions of the lower classes so that the reasons for discontent would disappear. Also, the government had to purge the armed forces and carabineros of those unreliable elements who might still be tempted to interfere in politics. The government's tasks, consequently, were not simple.

Political problems appeared to captivate the government's interest. A committee to investigate the dictatorship was formed which filed a report accusing Ibáñez, Ríos Gallardo, Aquiles Vergara, Pablo Ramírez, Emilio Ortiz Vega, Carlos Frodden, Julio Velasco, Arturo Alemparte, and Isaac Hevea of having committed crimes against the Constitution.⁵⁷

⁵⁷El Mercurio, October 15, 1931, p. 9.

The Senate, upon consideration of the charges leveled at Ibañez, voted 32 to 1 that he was guilty of abuse of power. The lone negative vote, cast by Senator Fidel Estay, merely was a protest, as he remarked, "All of us should be punished for allowing the conditions."⁵⁸ The deputies, however, having been selected under the Ibañez regime, proved to be recalcitrant in approving the report of the committee on the dictatorship. The committee resigned when the deputies rejected information presented to it concerning attacks in 1927 on the judicial powers.⁵⁹ At the same time the government petitioned Congress to approve the dismissal of Ibañez from the army.⁶⁰

Montero legally assumed the presidency in December, 1931. The caretaker Trucco cabinet had had to deal with the country's economic problems and the naval revolt as well. The basic economic problems had yet to be solved, however. The investigation of the Ibañez regime had been started, but economic measures to improve the conditions of the unemployed and of industry had not been announced.

Montero, however, upon assuming the presidency, did not provide the leadership that the country demanded. The Congress, a legacy from Ibañez, continued even though most of the political parties demanded its dissolution. A general

⁵⁸El Mercurio, October 27, 1931, p. 11.

⁵⁹El Mercurio, November 14, 1931, p. 13.

⁶⁰El Mercurio, November 10, 1931, p. 11.

forty-eight hour strike was called by the workers. A petition was given to Montero demanding economic measures designed to better conditions, amnesty for the naval rebels, and for political or social agitators, dissolution of COSACH and Congress, and agricultural reform on the basis of he who works the land reaps the harvest.⁶¹ The strike failed as the workers feared they would lose their jobs if they struck. Order was maintained in the city.⁶² The demands of the strikers, nevertheless, were significant, as they underscored the problems left unanswered by Montero.

Discontent increased and rumors circulated of an Ibanista plot designed to restore the ousted general. The government discounted the rumors as it announced that the plot was known and controlled.⁶³ Rumors persisted, however, and the military was not above suspicion. Several officers were interrogated, but the police reported there was no organized plot.⁶⁴

At the end of January a handwriting expert, analyzing the script of Montero, disclosed that the president had the qualities of valor, consistency, serenity, friendship, firmness, and decision.⁶⁵ Conditions, nevertheless, worsened

⁶¹El Mercurio, January 12, 1932, p. 1.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³El Mercurio, January 17, 1932, p. 19.

⁶⁴El Mercurio, February 28, 1932, p. 25.

⁶⁵El Mercurio, January 31, 1932, p. 5.

economically and politically, and the parties and Congress continued to concern themselves with the Ibáñez government, forgetting the problems that at the time required a solution. Important military matters were left unattended. The proposed dismissal of Ibáñez from the army, the law to create a Ministry of National Defense, and the reinstatement of officers discharged during the Ibáñez regime all remained pending. Some officers were reinstated, however. Most notable of these was Colonel Marmaduke Grove, a man who would play an important role in Montero's future.⁶⁶

In March one of the goals of the civilian groups was realized when the government approved the bill that fused the Ministries of War and Navy and the Subsecretariat of the Air Force. The new cabinet position, called the Ministry of National Defense,⁶⁷ was filled by Miguel Alberto Urrutia Barboza, a retired Lieutenant Colonel and veteran of the War of the Pacific.⁶⁸ It was also announced that the headquarters of the navy would be transferred from Santiago to Valparaíso,⁶⁹ removing it from the center of political intrigue.

Disillusionment with Montero increased during April and May. The basic problem was the lack of harmony between Congress and the political parties. Montero had not decreed

⁶⁶El Mercurio, February 7, 1932, p. 19.

⁶⁷El Mercurio, March 5, 1932, p. 7.

⁶⁸El Mercurio, March 10, 1932, p. 13.

⁶⁹El Mercurio, March 12, 1932, p. 13.

the dissolution of Congress, thus leaving the men selected during the Ibáñez government at their posts. The political parties had demanded new congressional elections, but had seen their desires blocked by the very man they had elected. The parties had purged themselves of pro-Ibáñez members, hence disavowing many of the congressmen in the process. A leftist federation, furthermore, had been organized and was composed of parties outlawed or non-existent during the Ibáñez regime. The federation clamored for new elections, as it wished to place members in Congress.⁷⁰

Conferences were held between Montero, congressional leaders, and political leaders in an attempt to establish a rapprochement. The cabinet resigned in order to give the President complete liberty to deal with the problem. In a circular to the country Montero acknowledged that constitutional order was threatened because "some of those who have been responsible for the economic and moral situation that the republic finds itself are conspiring to overthrow the constitutional regime."⁷¹ Montero called on all Chileans to support liberty, law, and order.⁷²

With most of the country's problems unsolved, rumors of plots again cropped up. Three men were ordered arrested, Carlos Lavila, Arturo Merino Benítez, and Alejandro Lazo, for

⁷⁰ El Mercurio, April 2, 1932, p. 15.

⁷¹ El Mercurio, April 8, 1932, p. 7.

⁷² Ibid.

their alleged subversive activities.⁷³ As time passed, it became apparent that the government's suspicions were correct, as on June 4, the air force revolted and Carlos Davila appeared as one of the leaders of the rebels.

Plotting had centered in the military as the government reluctantly admitted when it was too late. Certain retired officers were dedicated to Ibáñez and in January and February of 1932, had begun conspiring to restore the ex-president. The government had known of these plots, but proof was not gathered and prosecution of the culprits was impossible.⁷⁴ Grove's reincorporation into the army was calculated to neutralize the danger, as he was an avowed enemy of Ibáñez.⁷⁵ He was named Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force, but instead of neutralizing the revolutionary threat, he organized his own plot.⁷⁶

The Minister of National Defense, Ignacio Urrutia Manzano, instituted an investigation because of the persistent rumors of a plot. He learned that several officers were involved. The commander-in-chief of these officers, however, refused to doubt the loyalty of his subordinates, and only after a delay was the minister able to transfer these men to the North. At the same time Grove's name appeared as one of

⁷³Ibid., p. 11.

⁷⁴Ramón Vergara Montero, Por rutas extraviadas (Santiago: Imp. Universitaria, 1933), p. 101.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 104-106.

doubtful loyalty, but Montero personally trusted him and refused to relieve him of his duties.⁷⁷

Grove's double life continued until June 3. A cabinet meeting was called that day and the Minister of National Defense presented evidence of a conspiracy centering around Grove. Montero, not wanting to act hastily, asked for more information.⁷⁸ The minister, however, independently authorized Grove's separation from the armed forces and warned leaders of the army to prepare themselves in case the air force revolted. The evening of June 3, Grove called on the minister and presented his resignation, and said, "I am and I have always been loyal. . . ."⁷⁹

Ramon Vergara Montero was named Commander of the Air Force, replacing Grove who returned to El Bosque, the headquarters of the air force, and remained there throughout the evening. Vergara, complying with the minister's orders, went to El Bosque to take , but the officers not only refused to recognize Vergara's authority, but took him prisoner.⁸⁰ As a consequence the government declared a state of siege and ordered the detention of Grove, Vergara, and certain other officers.⁸¹ The situation at first was confused

⁷⁷Raúl Marín Balmaceda, el 4 de junio de 1932 (Santiago: Imp. Universitaria, 1933), pp. 22-23.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 24.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 25.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹El Mercurio, June 4, 1932, p. 7.

as the government was not able to communicate with El Bosque and did not know Vergara had been taken prisoner.⁸²

The next day, June 4, the officers at El Bosque presented an ultimatum to the government and, at the same time, circulars appeared proclaiming the Socialist Republic of Chile.⁸³ The ultimatum asked for the immediate resignation of Montero and the transfer of the government to a Junta composed of General Arturo Fuga, Eugenio Matte, and Carlos Dávila. The ultimatum would expire at noon, and if not complied with, the air force would bombard the Moneda.⁸⁴

Crowds, awaiting the developments, gathered in front of the Moneda. Montero was determined to resist the rebels. A squadron flew menacingly over the city, demoralizing many of his adherents.⁸⁵ He called a cabinet meeting. One cabinet member suggested moving the government to Valparaíso and relying on the loyalty of the navy to insure civilian government.⁸⁶

Montero called Alessandri to the Moneda and asked him to confer with Grove. The rebels extended the deadline two hours as Alessandri rushed to El Bosque. Alessandri proposed to Grove that a civilian cabinet be formed that guaranteed the ideals of the rebels. Grove refused the offer and

⁸²Marín Balmaceda, El 4 de junio . . ., pp. 22-23.

⁸³El Mercurio, June 5, 1932, p. 11.

⁸⁴Marín Balmaceda, El 4 de junio . . ., p. 29.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 37.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 38.

declared that the ideals could not be realized with Montero as president. Alessandri reported to Montero and expressed his belief that a solution could not be reached while the latter was in office. Alessandri was again commissioned by Montero to go to Grove and ask a committee of rebels to come to the Moneda.⁸⁷ He complied with this mission. Reportedly, Grove attempted to persuade Alessandri to support the movement, offering him the vice presidency, but Alessandri refused the offer.⁸⁸

At 6:30 P. M. the committee of the rebels appeared and conferred with Montero. Grove demanded that Montero resign. Montero, after conferences with the chief of the armed forces of Santiago, General Carlos Vergara, replied, "General Vergara has told me that the garrison is not disposed to support the Government; therefore, before the imposition of force, there remains nothing for me to do but retire."⁸⁹ The Socialist Republic was proclaimed by the rebels as Montero and his ministers resigned.⁹⁰

The air force had been the main center of the revolution, but due to the army's attitude, Montero had found himself without military support. That the rebels had spread their net into the army as well became apparent during the

⁸⁷Arturo Alessandri, "Mi intervención," El Mercurio, June 6, 1932, p. 3.

⁸⁸Marín Balmaceda, El 4 de junio . . ., pp. 39-40.

⁸⁹El Mercurio, June 5, 1932, p. 11.

⁹⁰Ibid.

revolution. During the early stages of the revolt, General Vergara had told Montero that El Bosque could be captured easily by the army as he had ordered troops from the School of Infantry and the Regiment Buin to march on the air base.⁹¹ Several hours before the attack Lagos, Commander of the School of Infantry, reported that a battalion of engineers refused to march, but he would go to El Bosque with the rest of the troops. Lagos marched to the base, but instead of attacking, told Grove it was necessary to avoid the loss of blood between comrades of arms.⁹² Lagos had known of the revolution and was one of the major schemers. The government had suspected him, but he had cleared himself. At the same time the news reached General Vergara that the Regiment Buin refused to leave its barracks.⁹³ Nevertheless, General Vergara still hoped to mobilize other forces for the government's defense. The carabineros were known to support the government,⁹⁴ but the organization of a defensive force proved impossible as the army was unco-operative. It was not that the army favored the revolution; it simply declined to resist it.⁹⁵ Hence, the army's passivity allowed the rebels to succeed.

⁹¹Marín Calmaceda, el 4 de junio . . ., pp. 27-28.

⁹²Ibid., p. 28.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 32.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 41.

There were several reasons which prompted the army to follow a policy of non-intervention. Army resentment against Montero had grown over the attacks on the military, the accusations against Ibañez, who still counted many sympathizers in the military, and the creation of the Ministry of National Defense.⁹⁶ Montero's government, furthermore, appeared to be a return of the oligarchy, as a Radical-Conservative coalition had elected him against the popular classes' candidate, Alessandri. As the economic situation was ripe for exploitation, agitators cleverly spread propaganda against Montero.⁹⁷ Thirdly, the socialist movement grew immensely during the Montero government and was assisted when economic conditions did not improve. The Socialists openly publicized their new program in their newspaper, La Opinión. They could not hope to implant their program without outside aid, and the armed forces proved to be fellow conspirators. Lávila, however, hoped to keep the military in the barracks and hoped the people would make the revolution, but the army began to conspire and the two movements merged.⁹⁸

In retrospect the situation by June, 1932, was an invitation for everyone to conspire. Blame could not be placed on any one group. The government was headed by a man

⁹⁶ Carlos Sáez Morales, Recuerdos de un soldado, Vol. III: El 29 de julio de 1931 al 24 de diciembre de 1932 (Santiago: Editorial Arcilla, 1934), pp. 51-61.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 68.

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 129-130.

who could not or would not deal with the vital problems of the country. If the army had not mutinied, perhaps the people themselves would have returned to the streets to end Montero's government and, in the process, would have accomplished a true social revolution.

CHAPTER VI

CHILE'S 100 DAYS OF SOCIALISM

The Socialist Republic of Chile had been proclaimed. The guardians of the government were a collection of professional revolutionists, opportunists, idealists, and Ibañistas. Carlos Dávila, in his magazine Hoy, had initiated a campaign of rehabilitation of the Ibañez regime and around him were those opposed to the July 26 movement.¹ The left was represented in the Junta by Eugenio Matte Hurtado.² Puga was included to give respectability since he was a highly regarded military commander. Grove had been a fellow conspirator of Ibañez in 1924 and 1925, but had been expelled from the country later. He had become a socialist and consequently represented the extreme left in the new government.

The Junta attacked the problems Montero had been reluctant to face. Congress was forceably closed by the carabineros.³ Economic measures were decreed into law. Before the country had time to recuperate from the change of government, Dávila resigned from the Junta because of differences

¹René Montero Moreno, Confesiones políticas (Santiago: Ed. Zig-Zag, 1958), p. 79.

²Ibid.

³El Mercurio, June 7, 1932, p. 7.

with the other members.⁴ Grove apparently had consolidated the power in his hands. Four days later the situation was reversed when Davila made his move. During the evening of June 16, trucks gathered around the Moneda and troops began to unload. The Regiment Buin took possession of the Ministry of National Defense and Grove was seen entering the Moneda. Machine guns were placed in the doors of the Moneda and Grove ordered the troops in the National Defense building to surrender. Grove prepared to defend the government buildings with the help of El Bosque and troops of the School of Infantry, who were supposedly loyal to him, and airplanes were seen flying overhead. Numerous conferences were held between the military commanders. The loyalty of the School of Infantry had been misjudged, however, as troops from the school, under the command of Lagos, set up two cannons aimed at the Moneda. A provisional revolutionary committee, headed by General Agustín Moreno, released a statement saying that all units of the capital had pledged their support to the movement.⁵ Only one regiment remained loyal to Grove and he, finding himself isolated, capitulated.

A Junta, formed of Carlos Davila and Albert Cabero, announced that the movement did not signify a negation of the socialistic ideology, but "The patriotic and conscious officers of the Army of Chile could not allow the country to be

⁴El Mercurio, June 13, 1932, p. 7.

⁵El Mercurio, June 17, 1932, p. 1.

conducted down the tortuous road of Communism. . . ."⁶ The Junta announced, furthermore, that a constituent congress would be convoked to promulgate a Constitution in conformity with the fundamentals of a socialistic state.⁷

Dávila's sympathy towards Ibáñez could have meant the exiled general's return to the Moneda, but the Junta of Government announced that a return of Ibáñez to Chile was not deemed opportune.⁸ In July, however, Ibáñez returned. His friends had told him that the government was his for the taking, and Ibáñez, believing these reports, entered into conferences with Dávila. It soon became obvious that Dávila had no intention of leaving the Moneda, as he hoped to keep the power in his own hands. He procrastinated in the meetings until Ibáñez lost patience and told him to take the government and organize a cabinet.⁹

Dávila had emerged the victor. He had consolidated the power in his hands and had obtained Ibáñez's approval of the formation of his own cabinet. Consequently, the news appeared that the Junta had resigned and Dávila had assumed the post of provisional president. A cabinet headed by Juan Antonio Ríos, as minister of interior, was announced,¹⁰ and

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸El Mercurio, June 19, 1932, p. 17.

⁹Montero Moreno, p. 85.

¹⁰El Mercurio, July 8, 1932, p. 1.

soon afterwards the government asked Ibáñez to leave the country. On July 4 he crossed into Argentina.¹¹

Even though Lavila was in effective control of the Moneda, he could not count on a great deal of public sympathy. The socialist movement was a recent development, having been outlawed during Ibáñez's regime, and it did not represent a large segment of the electorate. Lavila, secondly, faced the same economic problems Montero had been unable to solve. He attacked these problems sincerely but unrealistically. Agencies were established to further industrialization, plans were laid to lower the cost of living, rural education was to be expanded, and unemployment was to be eradicated. Lavila, however, lacked one resource to accomplish these ambitious plans, and that was solid capital.¹² He also announced economizing governmental expenses, but instead actually increased the number of public employees.¹³

The government, nevertheless, announced that it would finance its programs by emitting new issues of currency. This action had an unfortunate affect as the money, on free exchange, fell in value and consumers were hit by a subsequent rise in prices.¹⁴ Chilean capital, already nearly nonexistent, disappeared as the devaluation of the money

¹¹Carlos Sáez Morales, Recuerdos de un soldado, Vol. III: El 29 de julio de 1931 al 24 de diciembre de 1932 (Santiago: Editorial Arcilla, 1934), p. 242.

¹²Ibid., pp. 243-245.

¹³Ibid., p. 247.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 249.

fostered either hoarding or the purchase of foreign bills. The stock market, because of the uncertainty of the national political and economic situation, experienced a high volume of sales. As a result, businesses closed, while others laid off employees.¹⁵ Davila's plans had an adverse affect. Unemployment increased instead of decreasing. Consequently, discontent with the administration increased.

By the end of August it became apparent that Davila's days in power were numbered. At this time the government decreed that elections for a constituent congress would be held on October 30. After drafting a new constitution it would become the regular legislative body, and would then fix the date for the presidential elections. The public and military men were opposed to this procedure as it appeared Davila was attempting to prolong his stay in the Moneda. The people desired that arbitrary authority be ended and presidential elections held.¹⁶ Davila, at the same time, found himself increasingly isolated. He was attacked by the right for having ousted Montero, and by the left for having purged Grove and Matte. The vast majority of the army officers merely tolerated him.¹⁷

His stay as provisional president was prolonged, however, as the elements working for his removal could not agree

¹⁵Ibid., p. 250.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 258.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 259.

on a replacement. The military commanders decided to take matters into their own hands when it appeared that Davila was planning to declare his candidacy for the presidency. On September 12 a group of the officers met and drew up a petition asking for cabinet changes and the withdrawal of Davila's candidacy. The next day a delegation from the committee went to the Moneda to learn the government's decision. The cabinet changes were agreed to, but nothing was resolved on Davila's candidacy. The commanders of all the units of Santiago then met with the commission and it was obvious that the majority desired the military's petition. Davila had no choice but to resign as he had neither military nor popular support. The military commanders had agreed previously that General Bartolomé Blanche would assume the position of minister of interior and, subsequently, that of provisional president.¹⁸

Davila's fall was accomplished with a minimum of effort and energy. Blanche, universally respected in the army, released a statement promising to re-establish public liberties and sustain socialistic aspirations.¹⁹ The army, at the same time, released a manifesto explaining its action.

Convinced of the uselessness of maintaining a Government that has called itself socialist, but that, in reality, has returned to the practices of previous governments, establishing a regime of restriction of liberties that was excused as a manner of implanting a regime of greater social justice . . . the armed

¹⁸El Mercurio, September 14, 1932, p. 1.

¹⁹Ibid.

forces have demanded the return of the administration to men who will re-establish public liberties and preside with impartiality in the next election.

As always, the armed institutions will maintain order and will watch to see that means are taken for the relief of class needs. The election of October completed, they will then return to their professional duties with the knowledge of having offered the country an opportunity of purifying its governmental practices and of having directed the course towards a regime more in harmony with social justice.²⁰

Blanche's position was immediately challenged by the air force which asked him to state his intentions as to his tenure of office. Blanche declared that he would remain at the head of the government until elections were held. He would then hand his power to his elected successor. The Commander of the Air Force, Arturo Merino Benítez, objected to a military man remaining in the Moneda, but agreed to Blanche's appointment until the politicians and other forces could pick a civilian replacement. Blanche, however, began the task of forming a cabinet. The air force did not look favorably on this action.²¹

Commander Merino's objections to a military man apparently were not entirely altruistic. Later reports said that while Blanche was attempting to form a cabinet, Merino had met with him and demanded either the creation of a Ministry of the Air Force or a Junta Militar, composed of the army, navy, and air force. His object was to give the air force direct participation in the government.²² Blanche had been

²⁰El Mercurio, September 14, 1932, p. 7.

²¹Saez, III, 274-275.

²²El Mercurio, September 16, 1932, p. 1.

ready to resign, but the military commanders insisted he stay and announced they would try to change Merino's demands. Before the opposition to his demands, Merino announced that he would retire and abandon all political activity.²³

In any case Merino later decided to implement his ideas with regard to Blanche's permanence in the Moneda. In El Bosque planes were readied for action as the air force declared its loyalty to its commander. The government also prepared its forces. Pedro Lagos, acting Minister of War, announced that the government would subdue the air force, and ordered the seizure of all air bases in the country. El Bosque was seized without a fight as it had been deserted. The air force had withdrawn to Ovalle to establish its center of resistance.²⁴ Merino's movement was short-lived, as on the next day the air base at Ovalle was taken by forces of the Regiment Arica and carabineros. The rebels were arrested and taken to La Serena.²⁵

Blanche's provisional government appeared saved. Political criticism, however, soon appeared. The Radical Assembly of Santiago voted to repudiate all dictatorships and all intervention of the armed forces in the government. The Assembly asserted that Blanche's government represented only

²³Ibid.

²⁴El Mercurio, September 15, 1932, p. 1.

²⁵El Mercurio, September 16, 1932, p. 1.

those seeking personal interests.²⁶ The Democratas announced that they would aid only a civilian government.²⁷ At the same time army officers were being increasingly criticized for their persistent intervention in political matters. In the Radical Assembly a motion was presented calling for the dissolution of the army.²⁸ Army officers replied to the attacks and reminded the politicians that civilians had supported and aided the military excursions into politics. The civilians and the country, however, were not willing to be placated by excuses or reminded of their own errors. Blanche, being a military man, was not acceptable to the majority of the people. Only a spark was needed to ignite the fuse of another movement.

September 27 the government received a telegram from the Commander of the first division, General Pedro Vignola. In the telegram Vignola and the first division expressed their concern over rumors that Ibañez was going to be restored to military duty and that a military man, Blanche, was to remain as provisional president until new elections were held. He, furthermore, resented the public criticism of the entire army, when the culprits who had caused the national instability were only the officers of the garrison of Santiago. Vignola asked, therefore, that the garrison of Santiago agree to certain demands: (1) to repudiate all military

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷El Mercurio, September 17, 1932, p. 3.

²⁸El Mercurio, September 16, 1932, p. 3.

intervention in the affairs of the state, (2) to re-establish constitutional order and install a civilian who could preside over the October elections, (3) to work for the solution of national problems, and (4) to announce that the Constitution was the only basis on which to establish a stable government.²⁹

The Commander-in-Chief of the Army, General Ludwig, replied to the telegram and assured Vignola that Ibáñez would not be restored to duty in the army and that Blanche would give up the presidency.³⁰ A replacement, General Armando Marín, was ordered to proceed to Antofagasta and assume Vignola's command, but Vignola's telegram had found sympathetic listeners and Blanche's days in the Moneda were numbered.

General Marín hurried to Antofagasta and was met at the airport by civilians who would not let him leave his airplane except in their custody. As he could not relieve Vignola, he returned to Santiago. The civilian-military movement then presented demands to Blanche: his retirement as well as the retirement of all ministers who had served in previous military regimes, the deliverance of the government into the hands of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and selection of men for the cabinet who were completely non-political, elections to be held as schedule on October 30,

²⁹Sáez, III, 284-285.

³⁰El Mercurio, October 1, 1932, p. 1.

and the maintenance of Vignola and other rebels in their posts.³¹

The movement spread rapidly to other cities. In Santiago civilian demonstrations broke out and an ugly incident occurred. Mobs, incited by the speeches and festivities, headed for the barracks of the Regiment Buin as citizens were reportedly detained there. The crowds demanded the release of these people. Officers were waiting for the demonstrators, and in an attempt to stop the mob they fired into the air. This only enraged the demonstrators and in another volley, four civilians were injured. Carabineros arrived and after conferences with the civilians, the mob was persuaded to retire.³²

In Concepción another incident nearly occurred. A public meeting was called in support of the Antofagasta movement. Military and civilian leaders announced that any meeting would be closed by force. The Regiment Chacabuco and the carabineros were ordered to take their assigned positions. The third battalion of the Regiment Chacabuco refused to obey the order and remained in its barracks. The situation was tense as it appeared that General Pizarro would use other forces to subdue the rebellious battalion. His attempts collapsed when the news of Blanche's resignation became known.³³

³¹Ibid.

³²El Mercurio, October 2, 1932, p. 17.

³³Ibid.

Blanche's fall was triggered by a popular outburst against the de facto military governments. He could not have remained in power without provoking serious incidents, and in any case he could not have counted on the aid of all the army as the reactions of the Antofagasta and Concepción garrisons indicated. The navy, besides, was unsympathetic to the army-air force political manipulations. When Blanche's resignation was announced, the navy quickly pledged its support to the new government and vowed, if necessary, to fight for the laws of the republic.³⁴

In accord with the rebel demands Blanche relinquished the reins of the government to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Abraham Oyandel. As abruptly as the military revolutions had begun in 1924, they ceased in 1932. From Oyandel's caretaker government until the present, no military revolution has succeeded in toppling the regularly elected government. Plots have been discovered but unmasked before they were able to succeed. Probably the most important reason why future military revolutions failed was the lesson serious minded officers learned from the period of military intervention in politics.

El Mercurio editorially reminded the citizens that civilians had always been on hand to cheer and aid the military. The paper asked, "Have the citizens learned

³⁴El Mercurio, October 3, 1932, p. 7.

lessons from these sad years?"³⁵ In answer to this question some citizens responded with the Republican Militia. At least some learned that to fight force they had to have their own force. But the politicians learned more slowly. Ibañez, rejected and politically dead in 1932, was able to run for the presidency in 1938 and in 1942 until he finally succeeded in winning the election of 1952. He was not as closely associated with the military as in 1927-1931, but many of his old military comrades aided him in his campaigns. The lawmakers, furthermore, failed to realize that the military revolutions had been planned and were accepted because they offered solutions to problems of vital public interest. In order to end social unrest the civilians would have to offer their own solutions to these problems. Nevertheless, many of the basic problems of Chile remained unsolved. Consequently, the unrest continued, fostering in recent times the communist movement.

In reality the period from 1931-1932 was the most turbulent in recent Chilean history. Keeping track of the presidents, juntas, and cabinet changes could have been a full time job. As Will Rogers, landing at Los Cerrillos on a good will tour remarked:

I am going tomorrow and if tonight a revolution begins I ask people not to blame me.

I come to rest and not to make revolutions. It is certain that here I know many diplomats and many military men; sufficient diplomats to start a revolution

³⁵El Mercurio, October 4, 1932, p. 3.

and sufficient military men to end it. But, I assure you I don't want to be President.³⁶

Few Chileans could sincerely make the same statement.

The military was blamed for the political upheavals and the economic situation. After the Ibañez regime had fallen, respect for the military fell to an all-time low. With the Coquimbo affair, it dipped even further. Montero's election buoyed the nation's hopes and the military, swearing loyalty to his government, regained a part of its lost prestige. Montero's regime, however, was overthrown by the supposedly loyal military. What followed was a series of military uprisings in the Latin-American tradition.

In the provinces a strong wave of protest developed against the Santiago garrison. This protest movement, in part, succeeded in ending the military intervention. Arturo Alessandri, who had been elected to the presidency for a second time in October, 1932, also swore to end the illegal assaults on the Moneda. Alessandri would tenaciously cling to his office, only relinquishing the presidency to his elected successor in 1938. All attempts at disrupting order were severely dealt with by him and this did much to restore stability and constitutional rule to the country.

An offensive was launched against the military by the politicians. In the latter part of November, 1932, the Radical Assembly met and adopted a resolution that disclosed the degree of disrepute to which the military had fallen.

³⁶El Mercurio, October 15, 1932, p. 7.

The resolution called for a reduction of the armed forces to a minimum level, a reduction of the army and naval officer schools, delay in calling conscripts for 1933, and the retirement of half of the officers of the armed forces.³⁷

The army, seeing the public outcry raised because of its past actions, geared itself to the task of returning to its professional duties. All the generals presented their resignations to Alessandri in order to give him complete liberty to choose men in whom the public had confidence. Too many of the generals had been involved in the events of the past.³⁸ Alessandri proceeded to assign commands to the generals, and selected as Commander-in-Chief of the Army Pedro Vignola, the hero of the Antofagasta movement.³⁹

Vignola set the tone for future military action. In a communication addressed to the army Vignola stated that it had to convince the country it would guarantee the stability of the government and devote itself completely to the national service. He ordered that the bywords for army activity be "loyalty, labor, and discipline."⁴⁰ Alessandri postscripted Vignola's attempt to re-establish military discipline by appointing Emilio Bello Codesido, a civilian, as minister of national defense.

³⁷El Mercurio, December 1, 1932, p. 13.

³⁸El Mercurio, December 4, 1932, p. 25.

³⁹El Mercurio, December 27, 1932, p. 7.

⁴⁰El Mercurio, December 29, 1932, p. 14.

Alessandri, nevertheless, was accused of punishing the armed forces by reducing their budgetary allotments and ignoring their necessities. The excuse he gave was that economic conditions demanded slashing governmental expenses. Critics remarked that all the expenses of the services of the state were increased, including the carabineros, excepting the army and navy. "A very serious thing for the country and very grave for the security of the republic," they claimed. Furthermore, critics continued, in 1933 the obligatory military service was not fulfilled, for in 1934 only 2,000 men received six months training and in 1935, only 6,300. In the period 1933-1935, 60,000 should have been trained.⁴¹

It was a serious accusation to level against Alessandri and, if true, it was also a severe punishment for the armed forces. But the severest punishment endured by the armed forces was administered by the civilians. An armed, militarized, civilian organization was deemed necessary to insure political and internal stability. The army had been judged unreliable and incapable of performing its duties. The Republican Militia was therefore born.

During 1932 and 1933 the Militia fulfilled a vital role in Alessandri's reconstruction plans for Chile. The army endured the organization for four years. During this time the military devoted itself to its professional duties, and was to regain much of its lost respectability and prestige.

⁴¹Jonathan Swift, "La liquidación de los instituciones armadas," Hoy, IV (October 18, 1935), 13.

CHAPTER VII

THE CIVILIAN REACTION--THE FOUNDING OF THE REPUBLICAN MILITIA

According to the accounts, the founding of the militia contained all the ingredients of a spy thriller: intrigue, secrecy, danger. The setting was Santiago; the time, July, in the middle of winter. The Montero government had been recently overthrown by a faction of the army and the Socialist Republic of Chile proclaimed. Rumors were current of a variety of plots. Ibanistas, Monteristas, and Alessandristas were all accused of organizing movements. A group of professional men, however, ignoring these political schemers, met secretly to discuss the situation and, as a result, developed a plan of action that after months of work would bear fruit.

The idea that the civilians were the only real guarantee for peaceful and democratic government was rooted deeply in Chilean life. In 1924 the civilian tradition had been abruptly broken. There were those who bitterly opposed the military intervention for a variety of political, economic, and idealistic reasons and who worked for the civilian restoration. With the election of Montero most of the people hoped the problem had been resolved. The military, many

believed, had learned its lesson during and after the Ibanez government. But certain individuals who interpreted public opinion, felt Montero was not the answer, and the June 4 coup was the result.

In Santiago the professional group was divided into two factions.¹ One faction was formed at a meeting at the home of Dr. Waldemar Coutts. Prior to the organization meeting, according to Dr. Leonardo Guzmán, a well-known radical politician, a delegation of men who had never intervened in politics, but who now hoped to be of some service to the country, called at his home to ask him to lead a civilian restoration movement. Guzmán believed it would be better if someone not involved with politics were selected, and Coutts was picked as the most logical candidate. The delegation called at Coutt's home to offer him the chairmanship, which he accepted. Several hours later the group again met and each person brought two friends. The work of selecting men who agreed with the principles of the new organization commenced.²

¹Chile, Cámara de diputados, Boletín de sesiones extraordinarias, 1933, I (Santiago: Imprenta El Imparcial, 1933), 2668. Humberto Casali, deputy of the Socialist party, gave the names of many of the charter members of the militia during the debate over the organization. He said the genesis of the movement lay in the doctors of Santiago: Waldemar Coutts, Botero del Río, Julio Schwarzenberg, Kuschel Alessandri, Aníbal Ariztia with the aid of other professionals, Pedro Blanquier, Walter Müller, Jorge de la Cuadra, and Diego Sutil. In Valparaíso the organization was led by two doctors, Gustavo Fricke and Guillermo Münich. Casali called all of these men Monteristas with the obvious exception of Alessandri. Ibid.

²Leonardo Guzmán, "Sobre la organización de la

The infant group called itself La Una. Its avowed purpose was to enter into revolutionary activity in order to reinstall the legally elected government. La Una was also formed to publicize the idea of civilian management of government and to emphasize that the Moneda could not be won by force, but only through the means established in the Constitution. The motto of the society characterized these aspirations: Order, Peace, Home, and Country.³

La Una, as an independent organization, had a brief existence. The news that an organization with similar goals but militarized became known to many of the members. Some of them were actually members of both groups. The leadership of La Una, deciding that a unified group would be more effective, contacted Sánchez Errázuriz and came to an agreement by which La Una fused with the Milicia.⁴

The second small group, also of professional men, held its first secret meeting July 24, 1932, in the unfinished buildings of the School of Architecture, located only a few feet from the Arsenal of War.⁵ In the morning the men had visited the tomb of Jaime Pinto Riesco, the student tragically and mysteriously killed during the demonstrations

Milicia Republicana," El Mercurio, July 26, 1935, p. 3.

³El Mercurio, May 7, 1933, p. 19.

⁴Guzmán, p. 3.

⁵"Convención de Comandos y Estados Mayores," Boletín Informativo de la Milicia Republicana, I (December 1, 1933), 20.

accompanying the downfall of Ibañez, and in the afternoon the group of fifty-four men met to organize.⁶ Presiding over the first meeting was Eulogio Sánchez Errázuriz. The immediate problem of the organization was maintaining secrecy while, at the same time, spreading its ideas. The men were urged to tell friends who they believed would sympathize with a civilian restoration movement, in order that new recruits could be enrolled. For that purpose ten groups were formed of five men each to serve as propaganda committees.⁷

The ideological basis and goals of the fledgling organization were simple. Sánchez Errázuriz declared that due to the tyrannical government of Dávila, it had become obvious that the only method of maintaining constitutional government was by force. Hence he believed that it was necessary to organize an independent armed body to accomplish this goal.⁸ The armed group, furthermore, would unite around the common ideal of constitutional government and serve as an aid to the armed forces and carabineros in order to recover the lost prestige of civilian rule. As Sánchez Errázuriz remarked, "From this cry of individual rebellion the Republican Militia was born."⁹

As the militia was to be an armed body some

⁶ El Mercurio, July 25, 1935, p. 20.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ El Mercurio, May 7, 1933, p. 19.

⁹ El Mercurio, July 25, 1935, p. 20.

semblance of order had to be given to it. From the beginning military organization patterned after the Chilean Army was used. The first regiment of the militia, composed of the organizers and the first recruits, was called República. Prado Reyes was designated as its commander, and to him fell the task of forming the group of volunteers into an effective body.¹⁰ The task was made somewhat easier because of the fact that all Chilean males were required to serve a training period in the armed forces. Some of the men doubtlessly had prior training. But for many this training had been years before and due to the loopholes in the selective service system, many had not served.

In any case, the first months of the life of the militia were characterized by feverish activity. There was the problem of recruitment of reliable members. Secrecy had to be maintained as the Lavila government would have broken up the group if it had known of it. Money was needed for a variety of purposes, and training had to be given to the inducted members. Actual group training was conducted in an interesting manner. It was obvious that the militia could not attempt to gather all its members together for one joint training session. Groups of ten men would therefore gather in private homes and be instructed in the use of arms and indoctrinated with the goals of the organization. Patios

¹⁰Ibid.

and salons of houses became the parade grounds.¹¹ Whenever training had reached a certain stage, the high officers of the militia would visit these scattered groups and review them.¹² Personal sacrifice was the keynote for the activity of the organization. Arms were either donated or purchased with the contributions of the members. Training and indoctrination, however, were more important at this state.

One larger muster was held in the foothills of the Cordillera, away from the gaze of the public. A group of these hastily trained men met in order to receive the flag of their regiment from the Commander in Chief. A delegation from La Una, Muschell, Cuadra, and Guzmán, attended the gathering. Afterwards the union of these two groups was sealed.¹³

With this new boost the growth of the organization proceeded even more rapidly. The militia continued with its task of forming regiments while the ex-La Una members continued with their task of recruitment. The united voice of both groups called for Patria, order, and respect to all ideologies.¹⁴

September 18, the day of Chilean independence, was celebrated by a gathering. One of the leaders of the group commented on the significance of the day for the organization.

¹¹Dr. Oscar Avendaño Montt, "Mas alla del ideal," El Mercurio, July 24, 1935, p. 1.

¹²El Mercurio, July 25, 1935, p. 20.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

It is exactly 122 years on a day as the present that the first cabildo abierto of Santiago met in order to declare our sovereign liberty. It is necessary that we ask for our liberty once again, that we make of this organization a great assembly, a new cabildo abierto, and that we all swear to defend our liberty with our blood and lives, if it is necessary.¹⁵

Even though the organization tried to operate with a minimum of publicity, it was only a question of time before rumors of the existence of a secret armed body would reach the ears of the government. In the latter part of September the government publicly expressed its concern over these rumors of a "certain civilian military organization." The Minister of Interior addressed a note to the Director General of the Carabineros demanding an investigation of the validity of these statements. "The government wants to know the exact goals of these organizations, if they do exist, their places of meeting, and their controlling elements."¹⁶ The downfall of the Blanche government dimmed the urgency of the government's request as nothing was issued to indicate that the investigation was completed by the succeeding Oyandel caretaker administration.

It was evident that a gathering of the numerous small groups was necessary in order to give the men some experience in regimental co-operation. On October 9, therefore, the first concentration was scheduled. The risk of public exposure had diminished by this time, due to the series of changes in the government. The civilian cabinet could be

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶El Mercurio, September 23, 1932, p. 1.

expected to look with more sympathy on the organization than had the previous military governments.

In any case, the concentration was kept relatively secret so as to keep adverse comment or misinterpretation from cropping up in the press. The morning of the gathering, private means of transportation were utilized to transport the men to Lo Herrera, a fundo located near Santiago. It was not known exactly how many militiamen would be present because all of the previous meetings had been small, at no times including as many as 100 men.¹⁷ To the surprise of the leaders 1700 men appeared to take part in the day's activities.¹⁸ Four battallions were formed, of approximately 500 men each, and two airplanes flew overhead. The meeting was held from nine in the morning until four in the afternoon.¹⁹

After the first concentration had proven to be a success the morale of the leaders and the men rose. As a result activity to secure a greater membership and to perfect the organization increased. Publicity was a major problem since the political situation still appeared unsettled and the premature announcement of the existence of an armed civilian body could create a variety of reactions in all sectors. Presidential elections were scheduled for October 31. The militia, in a secret meeting, decided upon the role it would

¹⁷El Mercurio, July 25, 1932, p. 20.

¹⁸Avendaño Montt, p. 1.

¹⁹El Imparcial, October 11, 1932, p. 3.

take. The question had arisen concerning the candidacy of Marmaduke Grove, socialist, perennial plotter, and army officer. The leaders of the militia unanimously voted that if Grove won the election, the militia would be sworn to support the government as it was pledged to aid any legally elected administration.²⁰

At the same time rumors increasingly had been circulating over the existence of the organization. The press, not having the full details of the story, printed statements which, if left unanswered, could raise public opinion to a point that it would condemn the militia without knowing the true aspirations of the group. Several days before the presidential election the militia replied to attacks made by some newspapers and released an official declaration for the country.

For some time certain newspapers of the capital have become concerned about the existence of secret, armed organizations which they call "White Guards," and to them they attribute goals contrary to public order, and above all, they call them a threat to the public.

. . . The Estado Mayor has resolved to show the public the principles which the organization supports, with the object of removing erroneous beliefs or malevolent commentaries.

In the first place, the "Republican Militia" is essentially nonpolitical, that is, it does not protect itself under the banner of any party. The elements that form it belong to the most diverse political groups (Radicals, Conservatives, Socialists), or are simply citizens who never had joined in any of the existent parties.

The ideal that it pursues is the defense of order within the law and the Constitution for which . . . it will subordinate its action to the directives that the legitimate government indicates.

²⁰ El Mercurio, July 25, 1932, p. 20.

The "White Guards" have been formed in certain countries with the object of defending, even with arms, class privileges and interests created by capitalistic institutions.

The "Republican Militia" will never defend the interests of class or of determined castes, but will combat privilege even with blood if necessary, to maintain the governments that receive the investiture of popular selection. It will battle, therefore, against all tyranny, civil or military. . . .

It is not important to the "Republican Militia" the political orientation of the government . . . only that the citizen who occupies the presidency has a legitimate and clear title to it. . . .

Naturally, to defend the order and the Constitution, the "Republican Militia" guards the interests of the popular classes, because only under the reign of law and of respect to constituted authority, will be reconstructed the nation economically and will permanent achievements reached: a raise in production, raise in salaries, and life easier.

As for its components the "Republican Militia" has taken in all social and professional classes: workers, servants, students, professional. Where we find an honest citizen, who has faith in the destiny of the country and is resolved to struggle and sacrifice for it, we have incorporated him immediately into our ranks. The "militia" is not, thus, the creation of a caste or social class.

Nevertheless, the chiefs of this organization well know that there are people who never believe in the generous intention of the rest; these individuals are incapable of having it. For them only our contempt.²¹

With this declaration the militia shed its cloak of secrecy and could publicize its ideals and goals. The timing of the first public release had been significant. The country was involved in electioneering and only the extremist press commented on the announcement.

During the election, according to an informant, the members of the militia played a role which remained unknown to most of the public. Fears were widespread of an attempt to sabotage the election. The militia, acting in an

²¹El Mercurio, October 29, 1932, p. 17.

unofficial manner, assigned its members, who were dressed in street clothes, to strategic positions in Santiago in case trouble developed. Each was given a loaded firearm. The election, however, passed uneventfully and no organized attempt to disrupt the polling occurred.

The first phase in the story of the Republican Militia ended with the successful presidential election of October, 1932. The infant organization had its task before it, the protection of the legally chosen Alessandri government. The months of secret meetings, small training sessions, and ineffectual propaganda were past. The future, however, was still uncertain both for the organization and the government. A legal election, especially in the Chile of 1932, was no security that the victors would last for the scheduled period, as Figueroa, Ibáñez, Montero, and Alessandri himself could testify. The militia faced the task of establishing new regiments, increasing its membership, training, and, above all, demonstrating to the public and to the government, its belief in its ideals.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MAY, 1933, PARADE AND THE ORGANIZATION OF THE MILITIA

Alessandri's government was scarcely four months old when for the first time the militia publicly displayed the force it had assembled. Extraordinary powers had been granted to the government on April 28, 1933, in order that it could deal with the grave administrative and economic problems which faced the nation. May Day celebrations were banned in one of the first decrees issued after it had received these powers. Six days later, however, the armed civilian group was allowed to parade. For the public it was a memorable sight; for the politicians a thorny problem; for the militia a realization of its hopes.

The parade was not announced except in one small article. The public, nevertheless, turned out in numbers estimated at 400,000¹ to watch the spectacle. An Associated Press dispatch described the immediate public response, "Along the line of march there were many demonstrations for the Fascists, and a few against them. Women tossed flowers from flag-bedecked windows."²

¹"Chile's New Fascist Force," The Literary Digest, CXV (May 20, 1933), 13.

²Ibid.

Prior to the parade the Militia had gathered in the Club Hípico to organize and to hear a send-off speech from Eulogio Sánchez Errázuriz. In the address he recognized the sacrifices made by the members of the Militia of Santiago and the provinces, thanked them personally, but reminded them that Chile would be even more grateful for the lesson offered by the civilian movement. Delineating the goals of the organization, he said that its only concern was to maintain democracy as a system of government and to instill a respect for the law and for the Constitution. The friends of the militia were, therefore, all honored men who wanted order and peace; its enemies those who wanted to overthrow popular will. Ending his speech, Sánchez Errázuriz called for the formation of a new national consciousness of respect for the ideas of others within the legal framework. Once this had been accomplished the Militia could discard its uniforms, which would then become relics for posterity. The oath was repeated by the assembled members after he finished. At 11:05 the parade began.³

The actual composition of the parade demonstrated the rapid growth of the Militia in its ten months of life. The militiamen were divided into sections. The first section consisted of the high command of the militia; the General Staff, commanders-in-chief, secondary commanders-in-chief. Following these figures appeared the various

³La Nación, May 8, 1933, p. 3.

divisions of the country. The first brigade of Santiago consisted of the Regiments República, Argentino Nuevo, and Independencia. The second brigade of Santiago was composed of the Regiments Constitución, Libertad, Ataque, Tren, and a regiment of Communications. The fourth section featured the brigade of the province of Santiago with delegations from San Bernardo, Buin, Puente Alto, Curacaví, Maipú, Peñaflor, Talagante, El Monte, Melipilla, San Antonio, and Florida. The concluding sections demonstrated the spread of the militia into the other provinces. A large delegation of the officers from the province of Aconcagua was accompanied by regiments from Valparaíso and Viña del Mar, a brigade of reservists from the province, and battalions from Maipú and Villa Alemana. Five reserve brigades of Santiago were presented with this group. Due to the distances involved it was impossible for a large representation from the southern and northern provinces to attend, but small groups marched and showed that the militia had taken root in these areas. Representation from the regiments of Talca, Curicó, San Fernando, La Serena and Coquimbo, and Concepción; the battalions of Molina and Lontué, San Javier, Cauquenes, Santa Cruz, San Vicente, Rengo and Chimbarongo, Mancagua, Illapel and Salamanca, and Vallenar were present.

The numerical strength of the militia surprised nearly everyone. From the city and the province of Santiago marched 8,000 men; from Valparaíso and Viña del Mar, 4,000;

the rest of the provinces were represented by 2,400 men.⁴

A mere listing for the forces that appeared does not tell the entire story. Accompanying each regiment of Santiago was an ambulance and a truck with a radio. Other armament consisted of one small tank and twenty motorcycles. The militia members themselves marched unarmed.⁵

The faces of the leaders and of the militia members also produced comment. Second in command of the militia was Fernando Altamirano, son of General Altamirano, leaders of the Junta of Government in 1924. Commander of the Regiment Independencia was Domingo Durán, at the time a prominent Radical serving as minister of education and justice. According to one report, he received "almost continuous applause" along the line of march.⁶ As commander of the Regiment Tren was Gustavo Alessandri, nephew of the President of the republic. Accompanying the Regiment Sargento Aldea were five veterans of the War of 1879, a sight that produced a great deal of applause from the bystanders. With the militia unit of San Fernando marched the ex-Minister of the Treasury, Pedro Blanquier, as its commander.

The immediate public reaction was noted previously, but another response was awaited with expectation by the militia. Included in the line of march was the street in front of the Moneda. Alessandri watched the parade from a

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶"Chile's New Fascist Force," p. 13.

balcony of the building and the marchers saluted him as they passed by. After the parade had ended the crowd cried for a speech. Improvising, Alessandri obliged. "The emotional spectacle that has just been presented scatters the pessimists and opens before our eyes the luminous horizon of a new hope for national salvation."⁷ Eulogizing the work of the militia, Alessandri felt there was no question of the legality of the group since the Constitution did not prohibit organizations with goals such as those of the militia. "Furthermore, he added, "the government does not feel that the Republican Militia is a danger. On the contrary the government sees in it a basis for constitutional security; it authorizes its existence and lends to the militia its protection."⁸

The purpose of the parade was obvious. El Mercurio neatly summed it up by remarking that the militia wanted to demonstrate that it was disposed to defend constitutionality and that it had sufficient force with which to do it.⁹ The militia itself explained the significance of the parade in a release from the general staff, and, at the same time, reasserted the principles of the organization.

Citizens

The Republican Militia, that at this moment is marching through the streets of Santiago, believes that it represents the living sentiment of the national soul, a longing held by all good Chileans. . . . The militia is order, legality, and idealism. It does not oppose you,

⁷El Mercurio, May 8, 1933, p. 3.

⁸Ibid.

⁹El Mercurio, May 7, 1933, p. 17.

peaceful citizen working silently for your future; neither is it against you, soldier or guardian of order complying with your duty and respecting the disciplined oath that you took. It opposes the caudillo without scruples and communism without country. The militia is an institution of honor.

El Estado Mayor¹⁰

In any case, there was no turning back for the militia. The months of sacrifices and labor were now to be judged by the public. Alessandri had clearly expressed his opinion and the organs of public opinion echoed his sentiments. Numerous public figures also commented on the parade and on the significance of the militia. El Mercurio interviewed Juan Esteban Montero, the former President. Montero praised the mission of the militia and discounted fears that the group was formed as a counterweight to the regularly constituted army. "In the case of war," he remarked, "the army would perform its task with the same elements that form the civil militia."¹¹ He believed that the army logically had to see the militia as an auxiliary and as a safeguard for its own existence.¹² Carlos Ramirez Ahumada, outgoing President of the Sociedad Mutual de Comerciantes, expressed the businessman's views. He favored the militia as a cement for society and because it could mean future stability. "The Republican Militia affirms the future of the country," he concluded.¹³

¹⁰El Diario Ilustrado, May 8, 1933, p. 2.

¹¹El Mercurio, May 7, 1933, p. 5.

¹²Ibid.

¹³La Nación, May 14, 1933, p. 17.

Military comment was anxiously awaited. The Director General of the Navy, Rear Admiral Olegario Reyes del Río, caused a minor stir in Congress by issuing an order of the day concerning the Republican Militia. The first section of the order reviewed the situation from 1924 to the present, characterizing it as a period when groups with the greatest audacity were able to gain power. The second section of the order examined the militia. Doubting that political interest had been completely eradicated from the armed forces, he remarked that the civilians had formed an organization called the Republican Militia which had as its avowed purpose "to struggle for order and the conservation of the nation's fundamental institutions." Its birth was due to the awakening of national civic consciousness before the repeated assaults on the government. Reyes reminded the navy that during previous eras of governmental instability, civilian organizations had been formed to restore order. Concluding the second section of the order, he recognized the fact that the President, his ministers, a majority of Congress, and the people of Santiago approved the militia. The third and concluding section of the order expressed the official naval opinion. The Director General declared that the navy considered the existence of the Republican Militia convenient for the health of the republic. The navy valued the militia as a co-operative body in the task of preserving order and civil peace. The President of the republic, the order ended, needed this

opportunity to develop his program of national reconstruction.¹⁴ The army, however, did not issue an official statement concerning the militia, and the carabineros also remained silent. At least in some quarters of the army there was sympathy for the militia. The retired General Roberto A. Gañi, hero of the War of the Pacific, addressed a letter to Sánchez Errázuriz in which he pledged his support to the organization. Even though Gañi was 74, he expressed his desire to become a member of the militia. He felt the group represented the resurgence of the old patriotism, now lost, that in former times had aided Chile to become what she had. Gañi praised the militia for having saved the country, "and for that you merit the profound thanks of all Chileans who truly love their country."¹⁵

Rumors circulated, nevertheless, that the army was going to present Alessandri a petition concerning the militia. The Minister of Defense, Emilio Bello Codesido, replied that this was untrue as the military was unconcerned with politics. Furthermore, he added, the army was only interested in preserving tranquility.¹⁶ Several days later the Commander in Chief of the Army released a message to the army recommending that all military personnel abstain from discussions or comments on the matter. The function of the army was to

¹⁴ El Mercurio, May 19, 1933, p. 7.

¹⁵ El Mercurio, May 17, 1933, p. 3.

¹⁶ El Mercurio, May 10, 1933, p. 7.

be prepared for war, a different role from that held by the militia.¹⁷

There was not, obviously, universal acceptance of the militia. The most striking exception was Horacio Hevia, Alessandri's Minister of Interior. Because of the parade, Hevia presented his resignation.

I believe and I have said in cabinet meetings that the so called Republican Militia will become a grave danger for our political institutions, and the acceptance of their predominance will mean a negation of the republic.

In view of the firm insistence of the Republican Militia to gather and parade and my clearly stated opposition to these activities, Your Excellency has accepted the advice of others. There remains no other decorous road than to put in your hands my resignation from the office of Minister of Interior so that I will not hinder the policies of Your Excellency.¹⁸

Alessandri accepted the resignation of Hevia and appointed Alfredo Piwonka, a Radical, to the post. The matter did not terminate there, nevertheless, as Alessandri, in accepting the resignation, addressed a letter to the newspapers of Santiago clarifying certain points. He disclosed that on May 4 there had been a cabinet meeting during which the problem of the militia was debated. All the ministers, including Hevia, had agreed to allow the gathering and parade. There had been no remarks made, he continued, over the point that the militia constituted a "grave danger" for the country. In fact, the ministers had questioned Hevia about the militia and his only reservation was that other organizations had been

¹⁷El Mercurio, May 14, 1933, p. 21.

¹⁸El Mercurio, May 7, 1933, p. 21.

denied permission to parade. Besides, Alessandri concluded, the existence of the militia had been known since the beginning of his administration. Not once had Hevia taken action against the organization.¹⁹ The following day Hevia remarked that his memory differed from Alessandri's. He refused to elaborate or rehash something that had passed.²⁰

Opposition papers published sidelights of the parade not mentioned by others. La Opinión disclosed that when the militia passed in front of the Moneca, a group of workers demonstrated against it. As a result, thirteen workers were detained by the police. The citizens were conducted to the Intendencia and released after the parade. Others were reportedly detained at other points of the parade route.²¹

In a featured article the newspaper described the marchers. Many of the young men had Hitler mustaches and eighty-five per cent of the troops were blond, it reported. Hence, the writer concluded, it was evident that "the roto, forgotten as a dog, persecuted and unappreciated" had no influence in the organization and could expect little consideration from the "Creole fascists."²²

In certain student organizations, too, the militia received unfavorable comment. The Frete de Izquierda,

¹⁹El Mercurio, May 10, 1933, p. 7.

²⁰El Mercurio, May 11, 1933, p. 3.

²¹La Opinión, May 8, 1933, p. 1.

²²Alcides Brandt, "Despues del desfile," La Opinión, May 9, 1933, p. 3.

engineering students section, protested to university officials for allowing the militia to use the School of Engineering as a gathering place. This act, the students declared, clearly demonstrated the sympathies of the school officials for the "white guard." In a petition to the school officials the students repudiated the militia and declared that any consequences that might follow these provocative acts would be entirely due to the "reactionary spirit" of the present officials.²³ Other students protested in a public meeting. Speeches and humorous recitations were given and published by the opposition press. At one meeting a representation of a monkey was displayed and tagged the militia.²⁴

El Mercurio discussed the unfavorable comments leveled against the militia. In the first place, opponents declared the militia unconstitutional because of its incompatibility with the armed forces. Quoting Juan S. Montero, however, the paper remarked that the militia was not dependent on public power as it did not have a permanent public function. Furthermore, it was a nonpolitical organization which, Montero felt, could not infringe on anyone's political rights. The argument, therefore, that the militia was unconstitutional was baseless as the organization did not violate any of the articles of the law. Secondly, opponents called

²³La Opinión, May 10, 1933, p. 10.

²⁴Ibid., p. 5.

the group an organization of class. The paper reminded its readers that the militia contained all types of people, from all economic and professional stations. Besides, the group was not a political party, and therefore class consciousness was not important to it. Lastly, the militia was criticized because it was a negation of the regularly constituted armed forces. The editorial remarked that rather than a negation, the militia was a collaborator, especially with the carabineros, in the preservation of peace.²⁵

Agustín Edwards punctuated these remarks by attacking the detractors of the militia. He postulated that the major reason the militia was attacked was because of its democratic orientation; the leftist forces, being undemocratic, opposed it. The militia, furthermore, believed in a strong executive, an ideal opposed by the left. Edwards reminded the people that no one had to fear the militia if they sought to install their programs by constitutional means. "The liberty that the opposition has to condemn the militia is safeguarded by this same militia."²⁶

There was another question remaining in the public's mind, that being whether the militia was fascistic. Due to the international news, Italian and German fascism were being commented upon by all groups and in Chile a nucleus of a Fascist party had been formed. Some saw the uniformed and

²⁵ El Mercurio, May 11, 1933, p. 3.

²⁶ El Mercurio, May 12, 1933, p. 3.

regimented militia as a parallel with the brown or black shirted European fascists. Proponents of the militia quickly pointed out the difference. Fernando Altamirano, of the high command, denied that the militia was in any way connected to either the government or to fascism. Fascism, he added, had a definite program; the only program of the militia was maintaining that which was legal. At the same time, he continued, the militia was not a reactionary organization opposed to improving conditions of the proletariat. That was not the concern of the militia, and since the militia was for order, social progress would naturally follow. The militia, hence, was neither fascistic or reactionary, he summarized, as one of its basic tenets was the protection of any elected government, even if it were Socialist.²⁷ El Mercurio agreed that the militia was not a reflection of fascism as it was not a political party, as were the German and Italian examples. "It is a Chilean invention, a product of a social necessity. . . ." ²⁸

Two attempts were instituted to have the militia movement nipped before it spread. One was in Congress and the other was a court case instituted by a group of lawyers from Talca. These lawyers instituted proceedings to have the organization declared unconstitutional and illegal. The case was filed in Talca, but was argued in the Court of Appeals of

²⁷El Mercurio, May 7, 1933, p. 19.

²⁸El Mercurio, May 11, 1933, p. 3.

Santiago. Juan Esteban Montero was the defense attorney for the militia.

The legal basis of the controversy was decree law No. 50, article 4, letter e which outlawed organizations that imported, fabricated, sold, or distributed munitions or explosives. Article 9 of the Constitution was also claimed to have been violated as it established that only by a law could the forces of land and sea be fixed.

Montero, in his defense, denied that the militia violated these laws. In the first place, he argued, the militia did not violate the cited section of decree law 50 and, secondly, it was questionable whether a decree law was really a law. The Constitution had not been violated, he continued, as the armed forces had the character of a public institution and given particular functions, while the militia was an "individual organization" that did not require constitutional authorization. The militia, furthermore, was not an active organization, but was a reserve to defend the Constitution when necessary.

In his summary for the defense Montero called the militia an organization "born of a noble sentiment of patriotism." It represented a public desire to stop the repeated blows to the Constitution and to the laws. He cited the approval given to the organization by the President and by Congress. They had rejected the arguments of the militia's unconstitutionality.²⁹

²⁹El Mercurio, July 8, 1933, p. 9.

The next day the court gave its decision. It refused to declare the militia a clandestine organization as there was no legal basis for such a verdict.³⁰ With this decision the militia could look toward the future having received executive, legislative, and judicial approval.

Public comment on the first appearance of the militia slowly subsided. In regard to the future, Eulogio Sánchez Errázuriz expressed the feelings of the militia. It would strive, he promised, toward the goal of obtaining the complete consolidation of the democratic and republican regime. When that was achieved the militia would voluntarily dissolve itself, satisfied that it had done something useful and profitable for the country. He asked the public to realize that the labor of the group was voluntary; it was performed by working men, professional men, empleados, and obreros, all of whom took time from their leisure hours to receive military instruction. All of us, he concluded, would complete and were completing work that patriotism had told us to do.³¹

The immediate problem of the high command was establishing a semblance of administration order in the militia, as since its foundation it had been an organization of scattered groups, united only by the desire to protect constitutional order. There was little co-ordination and communication between these groups. The Commander-in-Chief in

³⁰El Mercurio, July 9, 1933, p. 23.

³¹El Mercurio, May 7, 1933, p. 19.

Santiago acted as commander of the militia and the provinces usually received orders from him. It became evident, however, that all the units had to be co-ordinated and controlled by one central agent in order to insure efficient and immediate response in case the militia was called on to defend the government.³²

As a result, the organic set-up of the militia was established with the publication of the "Organic Statute of the Republican Militia of Chile." The militia was organized along military lines, but with special adaptations.

An Estado Mayor General (EMG) was established as the supreme authority of the militia. Its special powers were to decree the dissolution of the militia, to order mobilization of the organization in case of an emergency, to name and remove the president of the EMG and the commander-in-chief, to serve as the highest court of the militia, to dictate the ordinances and the regulations that it deemed necessary, to name all officers above the rank of major, and to name the Estados Mayores Provinciales (EMP). In matters relating exclusively to Santiago the EMG would act as the EMP. The president of the EMG represented the militia officially before public authorities.

The commander-in-chief was the highest ranking authority in the militia and formed part of the EMG. His major responsibility was maintaining the discipline and military

³²"Orden No. 25," Boletín informativo de la Milicia Republicana, I (July 24, 1933), 24-26. Hereafter called the BIMR.

efficiency of the institution, and he was the only officer endowed with the power of issuing direct orders to his subordinates.

The general chief of services was his chief aid. His tasks were to co-ordinate the work of the various technical and administrative departments and to maintain communication between the commander and chief and the departmental heads and provincial commands. Under his direction were a number of departments: Information--informing the commander-in-chief on all news so he could plan the future action of the militia; Operations--drawing up general and detailed plans relating to military operation; Communication and transports--establishing a rapid, efficient, and secret system of transmission of orders; Instruction--instructing the units of the regulations of the militia; Arsenal--distributing to the various divisions the armament and other necessary equipment; Weapons--directing and regulating exercises on the shooting grounds of the various units; Inspection of Intendencies--inspecting and administering funds and managing accounts and inventories of the various divisions; Health--maintaining the ambulance service and field hospital; Personnel--maintaining lists of personnel and recruitment data of new members; Judiciary--managing legal difficulties and problems that arose in the organization itself; Propaganda--publishing the bulletin, regulations, and other publications of the militia.

To co-ordinate communication between the provinces and the commander-in-chief, the office of provincial

inspector was established. This officer had the power, if delegated to him by the commander in chief, to handle all correspondence proceeding from the provinces and to transmit orders to the commanders in the provinces. Another aid of the commander in chief was the secretary general. He also served as secretary to the EMG and the general chief of services.

In the provinces the organic statute established Estados Mayores Provinciales (EMP) which were composed of members designated by the EMG. The attributes given to the EMP were all those needed to fulfill its role as director of provincial activities, as long as this authority was not given to other officers, and to co-operate in the execution of the orders that the provincial commander received from the commander in chief. The EMP depended upon the EMG, through the intermediary of the commander in chief and if the EMP found itself isolated and unable to communicate with the commander, it could attribute to itself all the powers of the EMG, excepting that of dissolving the militia.

The provincial commander, designated and removed by the EMG, constituted the highest rank inside each provincial jurisdiction. He was responsible to the commander in chief for the discipline and military efficiency of his troop. The provinces were divided into six groups: (1) Tarapacá and Antofagasta, (2) Atacama and Coquimbo, (3) Santiago and Aconcagua, (4) Colchagua, Talca, and Maule, (5) Ñuble, Concepción,

and Bío-Bío, (6) Cautín, Valdivia, Chiloé, Puerto Aysén, and Magallanes.³³

The organic statute of the militia established in each provincial unit three categories of forces: mobilized forces, reserve forces, and territorial forces. Mobilized forces were units ready for immediate combat anywhere. Reserve units were those that had received sufficient training for combat, but were not on instant call. Territorial units were militiamen in provincial cities who did not constitute a part of one of the other two units. These men were in the small isolated towns where creation of a militia unit was deemed unfeasible. The provincial commander was backed by committees and departments identical to those of the commander in chief.³⁴ At the local level Estados Mayores Locales (EML) were created. They were given the same attributes as the EMP possessed in relation to the EMG.³⁵

Financial matters of the militia were handled by a department called the intendencia general. Three members of the EMG and the intendente formed the committee which approved all expenses. Funds of the militia were used to cancel debts and an accounting was required at each EMG meeting. The provinces had a similar committee, dependent upon the intendencia general. Provincial intendencias were divided

³³"Estatuto orgánico de la Milicia Republicana," BIMR, I (July 24, 1933), 24-26.

³⁴BIMR, I (August 15, 1933), 35-37.

³⁵BIMR, I (September 1, 1933), 37.

into three departments: administration, accounting, and purchases.³⁶

The general organizational outline of the militia remained intact throughout its four years of existence. Some changes were instituted in order to obtain greater efficiency. The positions of president of the EMG and commander in chief of the militia were joined in order to give greater unity to the chain of command. Eulogio Sánchez E. was selected as the first commander in chief of the militia.³⁷ The post of provincial inspector was abolished and replaced by an inspector general of the militia. He was the official representative of the commander in chief in the provinces and acted as a roving inspector reporting on progress.³⁸ At a later time the office of recruitment in provincial commands was abolished as, the commander in chief said, many people had entered the militia without being properly screened. Commanders and other officers of each regiment were ordered to direct recruitment.³⁹ The propaganda department was also reorganized, as the high command felt the duties and goals of the militia had not been successfully taught to all members. This department was expanded and its personnel increased.⁴⁰

³⁶BIMR, I (September 1, 1933), 37.

³⁷BIMR, I (September 1, 1933), 3.

³⁸"Sección oficial," BIMR, I (September 1, 1933), 31.

³⁹"Orden del día del Comando en Jefe," BIMR, I (April 1, 1934), 5.

⁴⁰BIMR, II (June 20, 1935), 8.

At the same time the organizational machinery of the militia was created, other regulations concerning recruitment were announced. The principle guiding recruitment was that "any Chilean citizen or foreign resident in the country, whose convictions concur with the principles that formed our institution is eligible to enter the Republican Militia."⁴¹ An information blank was given to prospective recruits. At the top of the sheet appeared a pledge that all had to sign.

I desire to become a member of the Republican Militia and ask that you present for the consideration of whom-ever it concerns the application that you have permitted me to complete.

I know the aims of the institution and I promise of course, on my word of honor, to comply loyally with the obligations and duties that the Republican Militia may demand of me.⁴²

The applicant was then asked to answer a series of questions concerning his military training, place of work, vehicles owned by him, organizations he belonged to, and position he could fill in case of a general strike. In regard to the question on ownership of a vehicle, be it automobile, truck, or motorcycle, the applicant had to understand that the militia could use the vehicle, if it were solicited.⁴³

After completing the information and application sheet, the applicant had to have it signed by three militia members. The application then passed to a tribunal which screened it. If the applicant were accepted, his name was

⁴¹BIMR, I (August 15, 1933), 35.

⁴²Ibid., p. 37.

⁴³Ibid.

sent to the personnel section for placement. He would then be notified of his acceptance into the militia, and the oath would be given to him.⁴⁴ The oath that each militiaman repeated obligated him to:

. . . give my life if it is necessary to maintain in Chile the legally constituted government and to struggle without fear and with the arms in hand if it is so demanded of me in order that respect to the Constitution and to law prevails in my country.

I swear to combat by any means, all tyranny, be it communist, civilian, or military. With such purpose I have entered into the organization called the Republican Militia and I have submitted myself without hesitation to the orders that I may receive, which I will fulfill without discussion, guarding the most absolute secret when it is asked of me. Against tyranny, for the government of the people and for the people, and for the liberty guaranteed by the Constitution, I swear.⁴⁵

An official carnet was then issued to the new member. The carnet consisted of his photograph, the number of his civilian carnet, his militia number, his province, and the locality where he served.⁴⁶

Each new member also received a note from the command of the militia explaining more fully the role he would play in the organization. Each had to subscribe to certain minimum orders: (1) to comply faithfully with and to transmit all orders received, (2) to maintain contact with all those in the same unit, (3) to propagate untiringly the principles that the organization maintained and to search for new recruits, (4) to explain the causes of the present disastrous

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵El Mercurio, October 14, 1934, p. 23.

⁴⁶"Orden del día No. 3," BIMR, I (August 15, 1933),

conditions, (5) to respect the secrecy of the organization, (6) to rally at all calls that any committee might make, (7) to verify statements that were attributed to the Militia by others, (8) to register to vote immediately, (9) to remove all incompetent and dishonest men from the organization, and (10) to aid the organization financially when possible.⁴⁷

The recruit was now officially a member of the militia, and entitled to wear its uniform. The uniform consisted of dark blue coveralls and overseas cap, given by the organization to the new members. He was required to buy a dark brown Sam Brown belt and matching shoes. Ensignias were placed on the right sleeve of the coveralls.⁴⁸

The member was finally assigned to one of the militia units. Those with specialized jobs in civilian life generally were given similar assignments in the militia. Men who in private life worked in communications were placed in that militia unit, and doctors were assigned to the health department. The task, therefore, of organizing the various departments and units was simplified because the organization drew many of its members from the skilled professional classes. Furthermore, as the law required universal military training, all males theoretically had a fundamental acquaintance with military discipline and procedure, but the militia organized training sessions and field exercises to insure that all the

⁴⁷El Mercurio, July 24, 1934, p. 1.

⁴⁸New York Times, May 8, 1933, p. 9.

members had at least a basic military education, rarely more.

The members of the militia, at the local level, were organized along military lines: squads, platoons, companies, regiments, brigades, depending upon the size of the contingent. In the province and city of Santiago, for example, there were three brigades. The first brigade consisted of three regiments; the second, of four; and the third, of the regiments of the province of Santiago.⁴⁹ The contingents from the larger cities generally were grouped into regiments or brigades while the groups of the smaller towns were called battalions. At the height of its strength, every city and town had its militia group.

The Regiment República, No. 1 of Santiago, was an example of a highly organized and efficient group. It counted 848 members. The men were distributed in the following manner:

Regimental Command.	11
Company of machine gunners.	49
Communication Section	39
Sanitation Section.	30
Transport Section	13
Command of First Battalion.	5
First Company Infantry.	116
Second Company Infantry	116
Third Company Infantry.	116
Command of Second Battalion	5
Fourth Company Infantry	116
Fifth Company Infantry.	116
Sixth Company Infantry.	116 ⁵⁰

Probably the most publicized of all the militia

⁴⁹La Nación, May 8, 1933, p. 8.

⁵⁰BIMR, I (January 15, 1934), 12.

regiments was the fifth of Santiago, Sargento Aldea. The regiment had been founded in October, 1932, by Alfredo Orrego Videla in order to silence critics of the militia. Critics accused the militia of being an organization for the oligarchy. The new regiment denied the accusation. Orrego had conferred with the high command over the possibility of forming a regiment made up of workers and empleados. The high command approved Orrego's proposal and in December, 1932, the regiment was formally organized and given its banner.⁵¹

The regiment participated in all the major public appearances of the militia and became one of the model groups of the organization. Orrego was appointed the first commander of the regiment, but resigned when he was selected chief of the department of welfare. His successor, Rafael Escobar Williams,⁵² reorganized the regiment, split it into three companies, and began the task of training the men.⁵³

The first public appearance of the regiment was in the May, 1933, parade. Its training had been only rudimentary,

⁵¹"Regimiento de infantería No. 5 'Sargento Aldea,'" BIMR, II (June 20, 1935), 19. The name Sargento Aldea was taken from one of the Chilean heroes of the Battle of Iquique during the War of the Pacific. Sargento Aldea was an officer of the Chilean vessel Esmeralda. The ship was destroyed in a bloody battle with the Peruvian vessel Huscar. Aldea, because of his bravery and determination in remaining with the doomed Esmeralda, became a symbol for Chilean patriots.

⁵²"El regimiento 1. No. 5 Sargento Aldea," BIMR, I (January 1, 1934), 75-76.

⁵³BIMR, II (June 20, 1935), 20.

but in the months that followed, intensive training was given to the members in preparation for the regimental review in October. In September, a preparatory review was held at the Fundo Conchali. At eight in the morning the war games began. At the end of the review criticism was given.⁵⁴

The review before the commanders of the militia was scheduled for October 1. At 9: A. M. orders were given to the troops to begin the war games. When the games ended the regiment formed and went through its drills. The final parade was then held. Afterwards, the regiment was officially entered as a mobilized unit, meaning the regiment had passed its review.⁵⁵

Training was continued, usually each company being drilled separately. In January, 1934, the second company of the regiment went into field maneuvers. The maneuvers began early in the morning and lasted for five hours. Criticism and speeches were given afterwards.⁵⁶ This field drill proved to be the first, as twice during early 1934, the regiment was required to live in the field.⁵⁷ The year's training was climaxed in August by an alert. The regiment performed well, even though it rained incessantly.⁵⁸

⁵⁴"El regimiento 'Sargento Aldea' prepara su revista," BIMR, I (October 1, 1933), 22.

⁵⁵"El regimiento 'Sargento Aldea' pasa a incrementar los efectivos de la division movilizable de Santiago," BIMR, I (October 15, 1933), 23-24.

⁵⁶"La segunda cia. del Sargento Aldea," BIMR, I (February 1, 1934), 22-23.

⁵⁷BIMR, II (June 20, 1935), 21.

⁵⁸Ibid.

The Regiment Sargento Aldea had become an efficient, well-trained group. The high command decided to send the regiment on a tour of the South as ambassadors and in hopes of stimulating other regiments to attain the efficiency of Sargento Aldea. Prior to the departure of the regiment, another review was held. The regiment had been drilling daily in order to perfect its training. The Commander in Chief commended the men upon the close of the review.⁵⁹

On September 16 the regiment left Santiago by train. In each city it visited a delegation of the local militia was on hand to greet it and afterwards a parade and dinner were held. The regiment visited Chillán, Concepción, Temuco, San Javier, Talca, and San Fernando. The visit proved to be a triumphal tour for the regiment and in all places it was received by large crowds. On the evening of September 30 the regiment returned to Santiago and was greeted by Schwarzenberg and members of the EMG.⁶⁰

During the first two years of its existence the regiment had been a model for others to follow. The trip to the South had been a climax to the period of intensive training. The regimental program for 1935 reflected the general slackening in the over-all program of the militia. Individual training with and without weapons was stressed.

⁵⁹"El Comandante en Jefe revista al Sargento Aldea," BIMR, II (September 18, 1934), 47-49.

⁶⁰"El regimiento Sargento Aldea en su triunfal jira al Sur," BIMR, II (October 7, 1934), 16-32.

Instruction in the theory of combat and arms was given, and regimental exercises were not stressed.⁶¹

The only regimental gathering was in June, 1935, when the men went to a nearby fundo for field exercises. In the morning target practice and defensive maneuvers were reviewed. In the afternoon war games were held. The review was a success even though it rained during the exercises.⁶²

After the announced demobilization of the militia in July, 1935, the regiment entered into a final flurry of activity in preparation for its final review. On October 30 the regiment held a dinner in honor of Schwarzenberg. During the after-dinner speeches a minute of standing silence was given to him in respect and in recognition of what he had done for the country.⁶³ Two weeks later the regiment held its last review. A mass was held before the review commenced. The regiment was divided into two parts. One group presented regimental drills; the other demonstrated combat exercises. Schwarzenberg, after the review, pronounced the regiment efficient and ordered its demobilization.⁶⁴ This order ended the official life of the Regiment Sargento Aldea.

⁶¹BIMR, II (June 20, 1935), 21.

⁶²"En medio de una lluvia trabaja en el terreno el Reg. No. 5 'Sargento Aldea,'" BIMR, II (July 5, 1935), 41.

⁶³"El regimiento 'Sargento Aldea,'" Caupolicán--
Organo de la Escuela de Cadetes Caupolicán, III, No. 53
(November, 1935), 33-34. Hereafter called Caupolicán.

⁶⁴"Pasa revista de eficiencia el regimiento 'Sargento Aldea,'" Caupolicán, III, No. 54 (November, 1935), 34-36.

The regiment had been pictured as the one that had men of the most varied national interests and of most differing social backgrounds: poor and rich, old and young.⁶⁵ As such, it, more than any other regiment, was a living symbol of the militia's philosophy and ideals.

Fernando Diaz Thomas, "Sargento Aldea," BIMR, I (November 1, 1933), 27.

CHAPTER IX

MILITIA ACTIVITIES

The militia, approved by the majority of public opinion, returned to its labors with renewed vigor after the May, 1933, parade, and expanded its activities into other areas. On the occasion of the first anniversary of the militia appeared the first issue of its Boletín Informativo de la Milicia Republicana. The magazine was designed to spread the ideals of the militia to all citizens of the country as well as serve as a means of announcing militia activities to members.¹

The first anniversary was celebrated in Santiago with a picnic for 2,000 members and afterwards speeches were delivered.² In honor of the day the Commander-in-Chief dispatched six militia airplanes to the South. The planes carried his personal greetings to Militia contingents in Talca, Chillán, Concepción, and Los Angeles. His greetings were also carried to La Serena by another plane.³ El Mercurio

¹Boletín informativo de la Milicia Republicana, I (July 24, 1933), i. Hereafter called BIMR.

²El Mercurio, July 24, 1933, p. 11.

³"El raid al sur de nuestros aviones," BIMR, I (August 15, 1933), 13-15.

remembered the day by commenting that the day before the government had announced the detention of a group of people accused of plotting and working for public disorder. The militia, the paper believed, was therefore still needed. "In a year of work the militia has extended itself towards all points of the national territory. Its prosperous existence is a safeguard for national honor."⁴

In September, official approval was again given to the militia during a review of the Regiment Republica. Alessandri and Gustavo Ross, Minister of the Treasury, were in the reviewing stand. After the review Alessandri addressed the militia.

Militiamen: I think of you as a brother and a comrade, because we are united for the same ideal. You and I are maintaining the tranquility of the country and protecting the Constitution, so that republican institutions will prosper and flourish.

Like you, I have sworn to defend and to respect the fundamental laws of the republic and in that task, I am sure, you will comply and I, I swear to you, will also comply with my oath in spite of what happens.

I have no personal ambition. I only arduously wish to dedicate my last years and my physical and spiritual resources to succeed in installing in the country liberty, constitutionality, and legality. . . . A country that has men full of the spirit of disinterested sacrifice and abnegation as you, has assurance of its stability, and is guaranteed of its progress and aggrandizement.

I tell you with sincerity that nothing nor no one will be able to bend the firmness of the present President of the republic, and if the occasion arises, I will maintain power in my hands at all cost and at all price. It is a bequest of high confidence that the country has given me and I will know how to defend it.⁵

⁴El Mercurio, July 24, 1933, p. 3.

⁵El Mercurio, September 4, 1933, p. 9.

The work of the militia was not entirely reviews, picnics, and speeches. The high command and the members worked to perfect the organization and make it ready to face any situation. An important gap was filled with the creation of the Communications group. This unit had the task of assuring that communication between the capital and the provinces was maintained. The unit was divided into special sections: radio telegraph and telephone, maintenance and installation of lines, motorcycle section, and carrier pigeon section.⁶ The other sections created by the Organic Statute of the militia were likewise organized and trained. The health unit, for example, held a review and demonstration of first aid.⁷ All units worked throughout 1933 perfecting their respective tasks.

The high commands, besides supervising the training of the units, established friendly relations with other groups and organizations. Overtures were made to the carabineros, as when the bulletin of the militia publicized the proposed carabinero hospital. The militia contacted the Intendente of Santiago and asked him if the carabineros could help distribute the militia magazine. The Director of the Carabineros, Humberto Arcazaca, thanked the militia for featuring an article on the hospital and agreed to provide

⁶"El grupo de comunicaciones," BIMR, I (October 1, 1933), 29.

⁷"El servicio sanitario de la Milicia Republicana," BIMR, I (November 1, 1933), 32-33.

the requested assistance. He also suggested that both organizations exchange periodicals in order to broaden friendship.⁸ From that time on the friendship between the militia and the carabineros flourished. On numerous occasions carabinero officers attended luncheons or other festivities of the militia. The carabineros, in return, held dinners for the militia. In October, for example, the carabineros held a banquet for the chiefs and officers of the Regiment of Reserve No. 12. At the dinner a captain of the carabineros spoke of the militia as an institution "which for its goals of order and respect of the constitutional government has merited the appreciation and applause of the Carabineros of Chile, since the carabineros obey these same principles."⁹

Militia-naval friendship was nurtured at the same time. The Director General of the Navy had already released his approval of the militia, and on subsequent occasions he restated his earlier pledge. The militia had asked the navy to distribute its magazine in the naval units scattered throughout the country. The Director agreed to aid the militia, promising to place copies of the militia bulletin in the naval centers at Talcahuano, Valparaíso, and Magallanes.¹⁰

All the affairs of the militia did not run smoothly,

⁸"La Milicia y los Carabineros de Chile," BIMR, I (October 1, 1933), 25.

⁹"Manifestación de confraternidad Carabinero-Milici-ana," BIMR, I (November 1, 1933), 16.

¹⁰"Nuestro boletín y la Armada Nacional," BIMR, I (November 1, 1933), 15.

however. In field practice two militia members were injured when a faulty hand grenade exploded.¹¹ As a result, one of those injured lost his hand. Opposition papers featured the news of subsequent accidents, reporting that five others were hurt by hand grenades,¹² but there was no evidence that other than the first accident actually occurred. The EMC admitted the first accident and awarded a medal to the injured militiaman for his "spirit of sacrifice and his personal valor."¹³

In La Calera a mysterious fire destroyed the headquarters of the militia and several adjacent homes.¹⁴ The militia announced that the fire had been intentionally set because when the firemen tried to extinguish it, there was no water pressure and the hoses had been cut. "All this demonstrates that the fire of La Calera was not a casual accident, but the premediated work of enemies of the militia, that is to say, enemies of the country."¹⁵

Late in 1933, militia activity was speeded up with the announcement that in December a concentration of militia divisions was scheduled in the larger cities. Training sessions were intensified in preparation for the event. At the

¹¹La Opinión, October 16, 1933, p. 1.

¹²La Opinión, November 13, 1933, p. 1.

¹³"El Estado Mayor General acuerda condecorar con la medalla 'Al Valor,'" BIMR, I (December 1, 1933), 11.

¹⁴La Opinión, October 23, 1933, p. 1.

¹⁵"Incendio del Cuartel de La Calera," BIMR, I (November 1, 1933), 3.

same time, the opposition stepped up its propaganda campaign. Rumors concerning the militia were published. The government was accused of giving the militia money, but the Minister of the Treasury denied the accusation saying the information was absolutely and totally false. A constitutional government could not dispose of funds without legislative authorization, he added.¹⁶

Hoy lashed out editorially at the militia in a series of articles, calling it an organization which awakened active resistance and frank hostility in the masses. "Rifles, machine guns, cannons, airplanes, grenades are the habitual toys with which the militia distracts its idleness and forges for itself, possibly without realizing it, an illusory and naive intoxication of heroism." The magazine called for a different type of militia; one which was unarmed, generous, humanitarian, "a militia of few heroes . . . heroes without politics."¹⁷

In a subsequent article by the former Ibañista, Ismael Edwards Matte, the militia was again attacked. Analyzing the organization, he proceeded to examine some of its claims. First of all, the militia asserted it was not an institution of one class. Senor Edwards granted that in theory it was not a one class institution, but he reminded the militia that the people equated it with the autocracy, and

¹⁶ El Mercurio, November 20, 1933, p. 3.

¹⁷ "Diferencias," Hoy, II (November 17, 1933), 11.

for good reason. For example, Carlos Sánchez Errázuriz spoke at the militia assembly in honor of Javier Errázuriz Mena. After the assembly the Estado Mayor gave a banquet in the Club of the Unión, which was presided over by Luis Subercaseaux Errázuriz. The name of Errázuriz, Edwards pointed out, was a name the man on the street associated with the oligarchy, and the Club of the Unión was the "Bastille in the French Revolution: a symbol representing caste and privilege." Edwards Matte continued by remarking that he did not hate the militia but suggested there was no real reason for its existence, as honest and just regimes needed no defense. In conclusion he raised an interesting argument, seldom used against the militia.

If the money and the personal efforts of abnegation that the militia have used had been dedicated to combat the terrible trilogy of unemployment, misery, and hunger, possibly there would not now exist in some parts the discontent on which subversion prospers.

If all the "overalls" that cover the generally well-cut clothes of the militiaman had been destined to dress the unemployed and to replace the rags of the poor Indians, perhaps the epidemic that decimated our population would not have occurred.¹⁸

The partisans of the militia called the propaganda barrage an attempt to incite a clash between the army and the militia. "They wish to divide the elements which in an emergency would be destined to defend order, public peace, the existence of the constitutional regime, and legality."¹⁹

¹⁸Ismael Edwards Matte, "Dúplica," Hoy, II (November 24, 1933), 3-4.

¹⁹El Mercurio, December 11, 1933, p. 3.

Several days later a serious incident nearly developed because of an article appearing in the paper El Debate. The paper had printed a note sent by the Commander in Chief of the Army, Pedro Vignola, to the Minister of National Defense, protesting a reported joint militia-carabinero gathering. It was rumored that the two organizations had marched and participated in field maneuvers together. Vignola remarked that:

I do not want to expand upon the consequences that could result from a clash between the army with any other armed organization, because you will understand perfectly of where the country would be carried. No one denies that the army works peacefully . . . and that it counts with fervent sympathy in all parts of the country.²⁰

Vignola did not disclaim authorship of the note, but protested because he had not authorized its publication, which he blamed on his subordinates. At the same time, the Chief of the Carabineros denied the alleged joint maneuvers.²¹ The militia also denied the reported gathering, as did General Novia, Chief of the Army and in charge of the field where the alleged incident took place.²² The militia declared that the incident fitted in with the subversive plot to discredit it and cause trouble between it and the army.²³ The next day General Vignola resigned his command. The army paraded for Alessandri and demonstrated its loyalty to him on the same grounds

²⁰El Diario Ilustrado, December 15, 1933, p. 1.

²¹El Mercurio, December 15, 1933, p. 13.

²²El Diario Ilustrado, December 15, 1933, p. 1.

²³El Mercurio, December 15, 1933, p. 13.

which the militia and carabineros had reportedly used.²⁴

Two days later the scheduled militia gatherings were held as planned. In Santiago around 11,000 men paraded. Airplanes accompanied the regiments.²⁵ On the reviewing stand were the Intendente of the Province, the Mayors of Valparaíso and Viña del Mar, the Director General of the Navy, the Prefect of Carabineros, the Ministers of Education and the Treasury, and other notables.²⁶ Sánchez Errázuriz spoke after the parade and announced that for two months the militia would rest, as the first period of instruction had ended.²⁷ El Mercurio congratulated the militia on its first year of training and expressed the feeling that now in each city a nucleus was ready to defend the constitutional regime. "Perhaps in the Republican Militia a manner of restoring to Chile her greatness of other days has been found."²⁸ After the completion of the militia's first year's training, Sánchez Errázuriz resigned as its commander-in-chief and Julio Schwarzenberg was named to replace him.²⁹

Even though the command had declared official rest for two months, some units continued their activities, as evidenced by the field maneuvers of the Regiment Sargento

²⁴El Mercurio, December 16, 1933, p. 13.

²⁵El Mercurio, December 18, 1933, p. 1.

²⁶La Nación, December 18, 1933, p. 1.

²⁷El Mercurio, December 18, 1933, p. 1.

²⁸El Mercurio, December 19, 1933, p. 3.

²⁹El Mercurio, December 22, 1933, p. 11.

Aldea. In other quarters an inventory of the first year's activities was instituted. The Aviation group of the militia had had a busy year, for the airplanes were privately owned and the owners had volunteered their services to the organization.³⁰ The main task of the unit had been transporting militia officers from one post to another so that they could make effective inspection of the scattered units.³¹ The high point of the year had been the sending of the six planes to the South as a part of the first anniversary celebration. Another important section which had efficiently fulfilled its duties was the Radio-telegraph section. During 1933 studies had been carried out on means to establish a network of lines connecting Santiago with the provinces. The telephone company had aided in accumulating the necessary equipment, and while the machinery was being assembled, carrier pigeons and other means were used to maintain contact with the outlying areas. The labors of the unit were rewarded in March, 1934, with the inauguration of the radio-telegraph station. The station was able to reach all parts of Chile and Argentina, and parts of the United States as well.³²

³⁰Interview with Dr. Julio Schwarzenberg, former Commander-in-Chief of the Republican Militia, April 6, 1960.

³¹"Actividades de la aviación miliciana in 1933," BIMR, I (January 1, 1934), 85.

³²"Inauguración de la radiotelegrafía de la M. R.," BIMR, I (March 15, 1934), 22-30.

The two months' period of rest stretched into four months. The high command announced on April 1 that instruction would again begin, "in order to obtain the perfection that we need." The period of training was scheduled to last until December 1. Two diverse programs were planned: one for the new recruits, to be completed by August 31, and another for the troops, designed to perfect the knowledge previously acquired.³³

One month later the militia was enmeshed in a serious incident. Undoubtedly the announced reactivation of the militia had some bearing on the situation as well as the date of the incident, May 1. In any case, the fortunes of the militia dipped momentarily as a result.

The incident was touched off by the detonation of bombs in the home of Julio Schwarzenberg and in the plants of the newspapers El Mercurio and La Nación.³⁴ There was no immediate comment from the militia. El Mercurio, without accusing anyone specifically, reminded its readers that one of the planks of the platform of the Federación Izquierdista was the disbanding of the militia.³⁵

Three days later the militia broke its silence and addressed a letter to a group of prominent left wing and opposition politicians.

³³"Directivas de instruccion para las unidades de la M. R. de Santiago," BIMR, I (April 1, 1934), 7-12.

³⁴El Mercurio, May 2, 1934, p. 9.

³⁵El Mercurio, May 3, 1934, p. 3.

THE REPUBLICAN MILITIA RESPONDS

Santiago, May, 1934

The country knows of the subversive activities designed to subvert public order and social peace.

While these activities have continued the Republican Militia has maintained silence, waiting for events. . . .

Nevertheless, unhealthy elements who are your spiritual sons, if not your direct agents, have carried your falseness and audacity until an attempt was made against the life of the Commander-in-Chief of our institution.

The Republican Militia is respectful of the law, but also it is conscious of its responsibility and of its rights, and will not allow itself to be the victim of cowards and criminals.

It notifies you, consequently, that you will be held personally responsible for whatever attempt may occur again.

We will proceed to punish it implacably.

No political or judicial consideration will sway the militia of this resolution.

El Estado Mayor General.³⁶

This communication was addressed to the following: Marmaduke Grove V., Virgilio Morales V., Pedro León Ugaldé, Guillermo Azócar, Carlos Alberto Martínez, Juan Antonio Ríos, Juan B. Rossetti, Manuel Vidalgo P., Juan Pradenas Muñoz, Raul Puga, Ramón Alzamora Ríos, Osvaldo Labarca, Alfonso Quijano, and Ricardo Latcham.³⁷

The militia described the bomb attempt in its bulletin. "In the quiet of the night the criminal hand of a coward threw a powerful bomb into the home of the Chief of the Republican Militia, General Julio Schwarzenberg." The magazine expressed its dismay at the treatment given to Schwarzenberg, as the man had always been a leader in public

³⁶El Mercurio, May 6, 1934, p. 21.

³⁷Ibid.

volunteer work. Being a doctor, he had contributed many of his free hours to the Children's Hospital, The Orphans' Home, and the Patronato Nacional de la Infancia. His reward had been a bomb.³⁸

Those who had been threatened by the militia responded with a manifesto signed by the General Directorate of the Chilean Left. The militia was accused of violating its oath and therefore making itself illegal.³⁹ No other action of the militia produced such an outpouring of comment.

Adherents of the militia rallied and attacked the interpretation given to the circular released by the militia. In an interview with a high official of the group, one paper reported that the circular was only meant to serve warning that the militia members would not be victimized or have their property destroyed by terrorists. The militia defended its members only when they were attacked, the official said. The paper agreed to this interpretation and remarked that interpreting the circular in another manner was dishonorable.⁴⁰

Alessandri entered the controversy when he addressed a letter to Schwarzenberg, May 7.

Santiago, 7 May 1934.--Señor Julio Schwarzenberg L.
Dear Sir: I have been informed by the press of a communication addressed by the Estado Mayor of the

³⁸"El cobarde atentado dinamitero," BIR, I (May 21, 1934), 65-68.

³⁹La Opinión, May 7, 1934, p. 1.

⁴⁰Las Últimas Noticias, May 7, 1934, p. 3.

Republican Militia to various persons, who are believed responsible for attempts that have been committed against your personnel chiefs.

Some suspicious spirits have seen in your communication a resolution of placing yourself outside the law, outside the political Constitution of the State, and in rebellion against constituted power. I believe that such an interpretation is entirely devoid of all foundation and truth.

The Government has accepted and permitted the existence of the Republican Militia because its object is defending in Chile the system of legally constituted Government and struggling fearlessly, and with weapons in hand if need be, to instill in the country respect for the Constitution and the laws.

Examining your letter and your spirit carefully, I believe that the communication that I have has not left in any manner from that finality. The final phrase, that could support a contrary interpretation, in my judgment represents simply your resolution to confront resolutely, whatever are the consequences that may befall you, the act that motivated the personal censure. . . .

It is perfectly explainable the indignation that has been provoked in the Republican Militia by the criminal and cowardly terrorist attempt that your Chief has been victim of and that has affected to gravely the defenseless persons of his family. . . .

Your indignation is just, and I recognize the lofty civic spirit and the patriotic abnegation which inspires the Republican Militia, but, as the Government is responsible to maintain public order and procure the punishment of criminals, in my character of Supreme Chief of the Nation, I must request that you abstain from usurping any of the powers of the constitutional, republican, and democratic regime of Government under which we live. . . .

The Government is trying to make all the inhabitants of the Republic respect its authority and comply with their duties, and it will maintain its prerogatives, defending order and punishing the guilty, some of whom, in this case, have been put already to the orders of justice.

Soy de Ud. atto. y SS.

Arturo Alessandri⁴¹

The next day Schwarzenberg replied to Alessandri.

He thanked the President for recognizing the civic spirit and patriotic abnegation of the militia and for understanding

⁴¹El Mercurio, May 8, 1934, p. 1.

the indignation of it at insults to which it had been subjected. Schwarzenberg expressed his and the militia's faith in Alessandri's promise to punish those who attempted to disturb public order. Commenting on Alessandri's statement that the circular had not placed the militia outside the jurisdiction of the law, he remarked that any other interpretation would be devoid of all truth. "The Estado Mayor General was in the right believing that the attitude observed by the institution during two years of existence removed all such suspicions." Schwarzenberg concluded by promising that Alessandri's desires would produce an order which the militia would respect.⁴²

The reverberations caused by the militia circular continued in political circles as left wing parties used the incident to fan discontent. The militia, nevertheless, still counted many friends. No serious attempt was made to force the government to declare the militia's dissolution, mainly because Alessandri had personally reiterated his faith in the organization.

The militia clarified its position during a meeting, of the high command, held a week later. All the top officers of the militia resigned in order to give its members freedom in choosing new policies and, if desired, new leaders.⁴³ A resolution was also approved which stated, "The Republican

⁴²El Mercurio, May 9, 1934, p. 11.

⁴³El Mercurio, May 12, 1934, p. 11.

Militia declares: that in accordance with its oath, it has maintained, maintains, and will maintain the unbreakable plan of framing its actions and activities within the most absolute respect to the Constitution and the law."⁴⁴ The resignation of the leaders was accepted, but in the elections, the same slate, headed by Schwarzenberg, was re-elected.⁴⁵

The press, commenting on the militia's action, called the resolution a sign that the attacks on the organization were unjust and unfounded. One editorial reminded its readers that those who called the militia an enemy of the people were in fact the people's real enemies. These groups were interested only in using the people to gain power, as they could not succeed in another way. The militia, the editorial concluded, was the real guarantee for everyone, as it was a nonpolitical organization, formed to guarantee the rights of the people.⁴⁶

Comment soon subsided and the militia continued with its activities. Militia members were reminded by their Commander-in-Chief that the military aspect of the organization was not the totality of its functions. He urged all members

⁴⁴"Política," Hoy, II (May 18, 1934), 7.

⁴⁵El Mercurio, May 12, 1934, p. 11.

⁴⁶Rafael del Río Gundían, "Los milicias y el pueblo," El Diario Ilustrado, May 13, 1934, p. 7.

to register an vote in accordance with the dictates of their conscience.⁴⁷

The militia also continued cultivating the friendship of the navy. A special issue of the bulletin was dedicated to the "glories of the national navy." The Director General of the Navy addressed a letter to the organization which was printed in the same issue. He again expressed his admiration for the organization and congratulated its members on the "noble and patriotic ideals that inspire its labor, ideals that they swore, before the country, to respect and to maintain pure."⁴⁸

In July, 5,000 militia members celebrated the second anniversary of the organization in the Municipal Theater of Santiago. Special memorial services were held in honor of Jaime Pinto Alecco and Alberto Llaneta Campino, the two martyrs of the July 26, 1931, movement.⁴⁹ Speeches were given by the high command of the militia. The commanders stressed the continuing role of the militia, as those who had caused discontent in the past were now in Congress, immune from prosecution for their actions. The command felt, therefore, that the "moral force," unseen and unheard, but ready to defend the constitutional government, was needed.⁵⁰

⁴⁷"Deberes cívicos del miliciano," RMH, I (June 5, 1934), 2.

⁴⁸RMH, I (May 21, 1934), 1.

⁴⁹El Mercurio, July 25, 1934, p. 9.

⁵⁰El Mercurio, July 24, 1934, p. 1.

After two years of the militia's existence, some groups began to wonder whether the militia was still necessary. Alessandri's government appeared secure. Rumors circulated that the militia would be dissolved. El Mercurio editorially expressed its hopes that these rumors were not true, as it believed the militia was still needed.⁵¹

The trip of the Regiment Sargento Aldea to the South increased rumors that the militia would soon be disbanded because of strained relations between it and the government. Schurzenberg denied these rumors and remarked that the militia, being nonpolitical, did not judge the acts of the government.⁵² Trabajo, nevertheless, featured a story which said that the Minister of Interior had ordered all parades cancelled scheduled for September 18, except those of the armed forces. Sargento Aldea was scheduled to parade in Temuco on that date, the anniversary of independence. As the parade was held despite the rumor, the paper remarked that this showed that a split between the President and his ministers existed.⁵³

La Opinión added to the rumors by headlining a story, "The army does not accept concentration of the militia."⁵⁴ The high command of the militia had ordered all units to

⁵¹El Mercurio, September 21, 1934, p. 3.

⁵²El Mercurio, September 24, 1934, p. 3.

⁵³Trabajo, September 27, 1934, p. 1.

⁵⁴La Opinión, September 27, 1934, p. 1.

prepare for a general review in Santiago, October 13. The paper reported that army leaders had asked the President to prohibit the concentration. General Oscar Novia, Commander of the Army, was reported to have met with Alessandri and secured Alessandri's promise to stop the gathering.⁵⁵

The next day Novia, in a letter to the paper, denied having met with the President, and declared that the army was absolutely unconcerned with all private, institutional activities. Furthermore, he added, he would not allow the issue of the militia to be discussed in army circles.⁵⁶ The paper, however, still claimed that its information was correct.⁵⁷ Novia, furious at the allegation of the paper, instituted a libel suit against its director, J. Luis Mery.⁵⁸ In the subsequent court case Mery was found guilty of libel,⁵⁹ and the Supreme Court upheld the verdict.⁶⁰

The October 13 concentration of the militia units from all sections of Chile proved to be the high-light of the year's activities. About 37,000 men attended; 19,000 were from the provinces and 18,000 were from the province of Santiago. Units from Valdivia, Osorno, Puerto Montt, Chiloé,

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶La Opinión, September 28, 1934, p. 1.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸El Mercurio, September 28, 1934, p. 13.

⁵⁹La Opinión, May 11, 1935, p. 1.

⁶⁰La Opinión, June 1, 1935, p. 1.

Bío-Bío, Mulchen, Maule, La Serena, Coquimbo, Illapel, Ovalle, Copiapo, Atacama, Ñuble, Chamaral, Potrerillos, Valdivia, Loncoche, San Patricio, Cautín, Pitrufquen, Concepción, Talcahuano. Yone, and Talca were present, as well as units of Santiago and Valparaíso.

The parade was held at the Club Hípico, a race track. After the units were reviewed, they marched out of the grounds and continued down Avenue Alameda to the railway station where the parade disbanded, and units from the South boarded trains for their respective cities.⁶¹

A lengthy speech was given by Schwarzenberg in which he analyzed the work of the militia in the following manner:

You are able to look with pride and profound satisfaction at the work realized . . . as the fundamental part of your promise of honor that you contracted with the country has been complied with. . . . The country counts on a loyal and fertile civic conscience and on an organized and efficient force, disposed to comply with its duty to the last man. . . . From this point of view you can look tranquilly to the future of the republic and to the stability of national institutions.⁶²

But, Schwarzenberg continued, there remained much to do. The militia had to extend its civic re-education program to all parts of the country, to contemplate what future contribution it could make to the country. He called on all members to join in working for the future greatness of their nation. As for the militia itself, he expressed his sincere hope that it, in the future, could lay down its arms knowing that it

⁶¹El Mercurio, October 14, 1934, p. 23.

⁶²La Nación, October 14, 1934, p. 16.

had strengthened the defense of the fundamental institutions of the republic.⁶³

Alessandri, criticized by some for attending the parade, summed up the feelings of those who saw the militia as an organization interested only in the nation's welfare. He commented that as a citizen he attended the parade, for the militia deserved the homage of all because of its sacrifices in the interest of a noble ideal.⁶⁴

Editorials of the leading periodicals commented on the gathering. La Nación called the concentration a demonstration that the oath of the militia to the republic had been complied with and those who felt otherwise would have to recognize their error.⁶⁵ Topaze, a political weekly, praised the militia for the spiritual force its members possessed, a force which the citizens in general lacked. The magazine expressed the belief that the militia held the future of Chile in its hands.⁶⁶ Hoy, before the outburst of praise for the militia, reported that along the parade route cries were heard of "abajo" with the militia and "viva" to the army. Otherwise, the magazine disregarded the event.⁶⁷ The militia magazine called the parade the largest the capital had

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴El Mercurio, October 15, 1934, p. 15.

⁶⁵La Nación, October 14, 1934, p. 5.

⁶⁶"Milicias," Topaze, III (October 17, 1934), 1.

⁶⁷"La presentación de las Milicias Republicanas," Hoy, III (October 19, 1934), 13-14.

seen since the Chilean victory in the War of the Pacific.⁶⁸

In any case the parade marked one of the high points of the militia's life. In reality one era in the history of the militia had passed. The emphasis on military education was slowly shifted to what the high command called civilian re-education..

This reorientation of the militia was best exemplified in the emphasis placed on the militia schools for children, called Caupolican. Orders had been released January 20, 1934, creating the e schools in order to form citizens who would love their country, respect the Constitution and law, and maintain the noble traditions. The regulations for the schools were announced in the same order. All Chilean children and those from the ages of 7-17 born in the country were eligible to join. Two classes of junior cadets were established; those who were accepted into the school were called cadetes de planta, while those who lacked necessary academic requirements were accepted on a three-month trial basis. A student of the school had to comply with certain rules. He had to be punctual, truthful, loyal, discreet, and moral.⁶⁹

By August, 1934, the schools were beginning to operate. Every Sunday, children went to the headquarters of the

⁶⁸ r. Carlos Charlín C., "Junio de 1932-Octubre de 1934," BIMR, II (November 5, 1934), 7.

⁶⁹ "Regulaciones General por la Escuela de Cadetes 'Caupolican,'" BIMR, II (August 20, 1934), 57-62.

militia for instruction. There they performed calisthenics, marched, sang, and listened to lectures. The student's special uniform was the blue coverall with white suspenders and a white overseas cap. Companies were formed on the basis of age and height.⁷⁰ In Santiago 7,000 children were reportedly enrolled in the schools even though entrance into the school was difficult. Each applicant had to obtain from his colegio a certificate that his conduct and scholastic ability were satisfactory. If the certificate were acceptable, a medical examination was given to the applicant. Upon completion of this examination, the student was accepted. The program of the school was designed to teach the student his obligations to his family and home, his school, society, and country. Classes in civics were given and current events were discussed. The brief history of the militia was also studied. Social activities were held at the schools in order to teach respect, etiquette, tolerance, and co-operation.⁷¹

A special oath was repeated by the students at every session, as follows:

I . . . promise by the love for my parents to attempt to be a good son, respectful of their commands and desires. I promise for my country to be, above all, a good Chilean, to orient my life in the respect for the home and the law; to preoccupy myself with the lot of those who suffer, and to contribute by my example and my action to raising their moral and material level. I promise on my honor to comply with

⁷⁰El Mercurio, August 7, 1934, p. 3.

⁷¹El Mercurio, September 2, 1934, p. 31.

my duties and obligations, within and without of the Republican Militia.⁷²

Editorial comment on the schools Caupolicán was generally favorable. As El Mercurio remarked, the idea was worthwhile, as it kept the children off the streets and, at the same time, educated them in civilian duties and instilled in them a sense of nationalism.⁷³

Parades of the schools were held and proved to be popular with the public. Families of social prominence flocked to the reviews to see their children perform.⁷⁴ In November, 1934, the schools of Santiago held a final review. Schwarzenberg was present to review the troops. All companies performed, with those of the youngest ages performing exercises for the crowd, while the older boys were split into two companies to execute military drills. The festivities were closed by a speech.⁷⁵

The activities of the militia and of the school Caupolicán were suspended during the summer. In April, 1935, the first meetings of the schools were held, and activities were renewed.⁷⁶ These schools spread into all regions of Chile and the militia garrisons supervised the education and aided in planning their activities.

⁷²El Mercurio, September 3, 1934, p. 11.

⁷³El Mercurio, August 7, 1934, p. 3.

⁷⁴El Mercurio, September 2, 1934, p. 31.

⁷⁵"La revista final de la Escuela de Cadetes 'Caupolicán,'" BIMR, II (December 5, 1934), 34-37.

⁷⁶"Incio su periodo de instruccion la Escuela de Cadetes 'Caupolicán,'" BIMR, II (May 5, 1935), 30-35.

These schools were destined to be the basis for the militia's later activities. From November, 1934, to July, 1935, the militia enlarged its program for children. The military emphasis of the militia was not entirely ignored, as evidenced in the activities of the Regiment Sargento Aldea. The situation was reversed, however, at the third anniversary celebration of the militia.

CHAPTER A

THE MILITIA AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES

The reaction of the political parties to the militia followed a fairly predictable pattern, considering what the parties' diverse programs were. The extreme right, the Conservatives, and the Liberals, gave wholehearted support to the militia with only a few individual exceptions. The extreme left, the Socialists and Communists, placed themselves in firm opposition. The center parties, Radical, Demócrata, and Democrático, provided the battle ground, as the opinions of their members were divided. The actions and manifestos of these parties were decisive, therefore, as they held the balance of power in Congress.

Liberal and Conservative Parties

It was apparent from the first where the sympathies of the Liberal and Conservative parties lay. There were some members of the Liberal Party, nevertheless, who were avowed enemies of the militia. The party organization in Coquimbo represented this position when it called on the youth of the party to abstain from joining the militia until its directorate gave ample guarantees to protect all civil rights. The Coquimbo body expressed its concern over occurrences which

had made the party oppose the principles of the militia, but it did not elaborate on the occurrences to which it referred.¹

In October, 1933, the Liberal position was clarified during a party convention. While the matter was not technically part of the business agenda, Marín Balmaceda interjected into the proceedings a motion for a vote of applause for the militia. The reading of this vote was received with a "prolonged ovation" and "vivas" and followed by "insistent applause." Delegate Angel Vásquez remarked, after the applause ceased, that the convention was for the purpose of electing a directorate and not to honor "an artificial institution which was illegal." Ending his remarks, he asked Marín to withdraw his motion, but protests from other delegates greeted the request. In the debate that followed Delegate Santander defended the militia, stating that it was not an illegal organization, but an organization to defend the Constitution and to resist a return of the assaults on the Moneda. An "ovation" followed. Antonio Huneeus Gana, President of the party, expressed the feeling of the majority when he called what the militia had done in strengthening public order and public confidence a great service to the entire nation, one that merited the sympathy of all men. Furthermore, he added, the militia did not aspire to intervene in or perpetuate the government. Even though some Liberals had to sacrifice their opinions, he urged all to

¹La Opinión, September 10, 1933, p. 1.

agree to the vote in the interest of party unity. The motion was put to a vote and "approved with enthusiastic applause. The majority in the room stood up."²

Party orientation was established and the official view did not change. There remained, however, minor opposition to the militia in the Liberal party. Upon the occasion of the militia's public threat to certain politicians, the dissenting Liberals attempted to force a review of party policy. In a meeting of the party directorate Humberto Yáñez Velasco proposed a vote censuring the militia, but the directorate overwhelmingly rejected the idea, 54 to 4, with 2 abstentions. The directorate announced that no new pronouncement was deemed necessary.³ As far as the majority of party members were concerned, the matter was closed and had been since the party convention of 1933.

The issue of the militia was not an issue in the Conservative party. Party approval was publicly and privately given. There was no evidence of even minor opposition to the militia, and party manifestos did not mention the organization. The action of the Conservative representatives in Congress was the best testimony of where party sympathies lay.

Radical Party

The Radical party, together with the Demócratas and

²El Mercurio, October 15, 1933, p. 25.

³"Política," Boy, III (May 11, 1934), 14.

Democráticos, composed what, for a lack of a better term, was called the center. In other words, these parties occupied the middle ground in Chilean political life, less conservative than the Liberals and Conservatives, and less radical than the Socialists and other extremist parties. The Radical party was, in fact, far from radical.

Chile's multi-party system left no party with a clear majority.⁴ Any government, to gain majority representation in Congress, had to rely on a coalition of parties. The action of the center parties was therefore pivotal, as both conservatives and extremists wooed these parties in order to gain a working congressional majority.

In 1933, however, the parties were fairly well united in support of Alessandri with the exception of the Grovist Socialists and the sprinkling of Ibañistas who remained in Congress. The Radicals were an integral part of the national government formed by Alessandri. Hence, the party's initial reaction to the militia was based on the political situation at that time.

Prominent Radical party members also joined the militia. Hernán Figueroa Anquita was one of the Radical leaders in Congress and a militia member. Domingo Durán, Minister of Education and Justice, was another. Their presence in the Radical party and in the militia implied unofficial Radical

⁴For example, 29 groups were recognized as political entities and five as political parties in 1932. All were able to field candidates. El Mercurio, October 2, 1932, p. 5.

approval of the organization. Party action towards the militia would be influenced by these men, at least as long as the party remained loyal to the government.

At the time of the May, 1933, parade official Radical party opinion concerning the militia was not released, although some of the Radicals expressed their disapproval of the organization. Horacio Nevía's resignation provoked comment in the party, even though Nevía was a Social Republican, which was a splinter party that had divided from the Radicals. The Radical party, however, did not officially support Nevía's action. By issuing no statement and by approving the appointment of Piwonka, a Radical, to the vacant cabinet position, the party gave its tacit approval to Alessandri's position in the conflict.

In July, 1933, the Radicals held their convention in Viña del Mar. Although the topic of the militia was not officially listed on the agenda, opponents of the militia in the party interjected the subject into the proceedings. Hipólito Gatica, a delegate, called the organization illegal and without any state control. Because of this, he maintained, the party had a duty to the popular classes to vote on the question, to repudiate the militia, and to call on Congress to declare its dissolution. He also suggested that the armed forces be reorganized to give the government greater assurances of their loyalty. Oscar Bustos, another delegate, agreed with these ideas. The convention refused to vote on

the question and left the party, by default, in support of the militia.⁵

As a result of the convention, several facts apart from the militia question remained apparent. First of all, the left wing of the party gained in power. This trend had been noticeable for several years, beginning during the Montero government of 1931-1932. Montero had been elected by a Conservative-Radical coalition. To some radicals maintenance of the pact was unthinkable, but at the same time, moderates in the party favored this arrangement instead of a pact with the left. With the fall of Montero the moderate Radicals had been repudiated, and the left wing of the party began consolidating its position in order to wrest the party machinery from the moderates. Up to the convention of 1933 the left wing had been unsuccessful in its attempts. In this convention, however, several motions were approved which indicated the growing ascendancy of the leftist Radicals. One motion was passed calling for an immediate repeal of extraordinary governmental powers, and the convention, after a length debate, voted to reinstate Juan Antonio Ríos as a party member. Ríos had been dropped from party rosters because he had participated in the Ibáñez and Socialist governments. To the right wing of the party, he was an undesirable.⁶

Upon the closure of the convention the Radicals who

⁵El Mercurio, July 3, 1933, p. 1.

⁶"Política," Hoy, II (July 7, 1933), 9.

held cabinet positions, Alfredo Piwonka, Domingo Durán, and Domingo Santa María, presented their resignations to Alessandri. The results of the convention had not been a blanket approval of the Alessandri administration, as the party felt the government was too slow in asking for certain legislation. Hence, the ministers resigned and gave the President a free hand in reorganizing his ministry, assuming that he knew what the Radical party supported.⁷ Alessandri, however, refused to accept the resignations, as he saw nothing contradictory between his program and that of the Radical party.⁸ With Radicals holding cabinet positions the party was still bound to the government. In the party itself, Luis Alamos Barros, President of the party, resigned. He represented the moderate position and was a supposed advocate of the Conservative-Radical working agreement.⁹

Provincial assemblies of the party, however, did not remain noncommittal on the issue of the militia. In Antofagasta, for example, the Radical assembly openly approved the existence of the militia and stated that the organization was not a threat for the country.¹⁰

Until April, 1934, the situation remained unchanged. Political considerations now caused an abrupt change in party

⁷El Mercurio, July 4, 1933, p. 11.

⁸El Mercurio, July 7, 1933, p. 1.

⁹"Política," Hoy, II (July 7, 1933), 10.

¹⁰El Mercurio, November 10, 1933, p. 15.

attitude towards the government, however, and indirectly towards the Republican Militia. By-elections were held in April to fill two vacancies in the Senate, one from Santiago and the other from Antofagasta-Tarapacá. In the elections radical candidates did not win and in the Santiago election, the party was temporarily split. In the North Fernando Alessandri, the President's son, won the seat, while in Santiago, Armando Grove, the Socialist candidate, was victorious. A reappraisal of party orientation was thought to be necessary. The radicals had never been entirely satisfied with Alessandri's government, although they still held three positions in the cabinet. Differences in policy emphasis were the main sources of trouble, as the government stressed order and economic recovery while the radicals insisted on more progress in social reform.

After the electoral results were known the party held a meeting to discuss the political situation. Rumors circulated that the radical members of the cabinet would resign. As a result of the meeting, a program was drawn up and one point concerned the Republican Militia. The party announced that it did not feel it was feasible to contemplate the immediate dissolution of the militia, but the government should consider the possibility when the opportunity arose. Rodolfo Michels, president of the party, seconded this feeling by remarking that the militia should not be dissolved because it was still indispensable.¹¹

¹¹El Mercurio, April 11, 1934, pp. 10-11.

El Mercurio added fuel to the controversy by publishing the program that Marmaduke Grove presumably would follow while serving in the Senate. According to the paper, he called for country-wide agitation to consolidate all socialist sympathizers. His goal was to cause the downfall of the present government by paralyzing vital industries such as the water supply and electricity.¹² Grove, however, denied these statements, saying his program was the same as his party,¹³ but not everyone believed Grove's denial.

This announcement of Grove's alleged program, among other things, had repercussions in the government and in the Radical party. On April 14 Alessandri suspended civil liberties. At the same time, debate erupted in the party because a segment of it had aided Grove in his election to the Senate. Those who had not aided him wanted to purge the Grovistas from the party. Due to the internal squabble, Alessandri's suspension of civil liberties, and the party's latent dissatisfaction with the government, the Radicals in the cabinet resigned. The rest of the cabinet followed with the customary announcement that the President should have a free hand to deal with the situation. Alessandri accepted the resignations of the Radicals but rejected those of the rest of the cabinet. He turned to the Demócrata to fill the vacancies. The Radical party was now outside the cabinet for

¹²Ibid., p. 11.

¹³"Política," Hoy, III (April 20, 1934), 7.

the first time since Alessandri had taken office.¹⁴ At the same time the party experienced a reshuffling of its leadership. The conventionalists, as they were called, had a majority in the Junta Central, 21 to 13,¹⁵ but in the interest of party unity did not attempt to seize the party machinery. Pro-government sentiment was too strong. A new directorate was chosen composed of both elements of the party. Luis Alamos Barros, a moderate, was again elected party president.¹⁶

No drastic revision of party attitude toward the Republican Militia occurred. In May, 1934, however, the militia issued its threat to certain politicians, including Juan Antonio Ríos. The party responded by re-examining its position. The party met in special session to consider the situation and several motions were approved. In the first motion the Junta Central called for disbanding the militia. The statement issued by the militia, the Junta declared, was unconstitutional, as it was addressed to private parties, and it was contrary to claims that it was a nonpolitical organization. With this act it had constituted itself as an armed political party.¹⁷ At the same time the party reaffirmed its support of republican institutions and condemned all action

¹⁴ El Mercurio, April 18, 1934, p. 9.

¹⁵ "Política," Hoy, III (February 16, 1934), 7.

¹⁶ "Política," Hoy, III (April 20, 1934), 7.

¹⁷ El Mercurio, May 8, 1934, p. 9.

that signified attempts against the stability of the republic.¹⁸ The decision adopted by the party was not unanimous. Hernán Figueroa Anguita defended the militia during the debate. The Republican Militia, he told the group, had never violated the law in its two years of life. When it was attacked in a "criminal and violent manner," he continued it defended itself with logic, simply notifying those who were indirectly or directly responsible for the attacks, that this type of activity could not be allowed. Figueroa assured the Radicals that the militia did not feel its action violated the law. Personally, he concluded, he would have left the militia if he had felt its action had been illegal.¹⁹

In any case the Junta Central had taken a stand against the militia. In political circles the question arose when the Radicals would declare that party members could not be members of the militia. Yet, according to prominent party members, the matter had not been discussed, nor would the Junta authorize such a statement.²⁰

The Radical Assembly of Santiago also met in special session to consider the matter. It echoed the sentiments expressed by the Junta Central and approved the decision taken by that body. The Assembly, furthermore, voted to combat all military, fascistic, or proletariat dictatorships that

¹⁸La Opinión, May 8, 1934, p. 1.

¹⁹Las Últimas Noticias, May 8, 1934, p. 3.

²⁰Ibid.

attempted to implant themselves illegally.²¹ In a later meeting of the Assembly an attempt was made to pass a motion calling on all Radicals to resign from the militia now that it had accomplished its purpose. The motion was tabled and, as far as can be determined, the party never took an official position on the matter.²² La Opinión announced that seven prominent Radicals had been ordered to leave the militia because of the incompatibility between it and the party.²³ If these forced resignations occurred, they were kept secret by both the Radical party and the militia, and such secrecy seems unlikely.

With the central organs of the party officially censuring the militia and asking for its disbandment the party's position seemed established. Provincial assemblies and individual party members, however, split with the central assembly. Due to the discontent in the party Lionel Edwards addressed a letter to El Mercurio explaining the reasoning of the party. Existence of the militia would produce only discord and difficulties, he stated, as many people believed they opposed the enactment of certain laws. In the interest of tranquility the party voted to disband the militia.²⁴

The debate did not terminate. In another letter to

²¹La Opinión, May 9, 1934, p. 1.

²²El Mercurio, May 18, 1934, p. 13.

²³La Opinión, May 9, 1934, p. 1.

²⁴El Mercurio, May 11, 1934, p. 3.

the editor, signed by "an old Radical," the fact that provincial assemblies had split with the central organization was disclosed. In Concepción the prominent Radical Senator, Ignacio Martínez Urrutia, remarked that if the militia ceased to exist, some other group similar to it would have to be created immediately to take its place. The Assembly voted, therefore, to support the militia. In San Antonio the party assembly took similar action.²⁵

In the northern assemblies Copiapó found no incompatibility between being a Radical and a militiaman.²⁶ The Assembly of La Serena also endorsed the militia, saying that the group was necessary for the maintenance of the constitutional order of the country.²⁷ The Aysén assembly in the South called the militia a guardian of the Constitution, and it went on record approving the organization.²⁸

In circumstances such as the party found itself no attempt was made to force the congressional representatives to seek enactment of the Junta Central's desires. The opinion of the party was too divided to form an effective front against the militia and, at the same time, the political situation again changed.

On June 14 Alessandri's extraordinary powers expired.

²⁵ El Mercurio, May 18, 1934, p. 3.

²⁶ El Mercurio, June 8, 1934, p. 3.

²⁷ Boletín informativo de la Milicia Republicana, I (July 5, 1934), 6.

²⁸ El Mercurio, June 8, 1934, p. 3.

Rumors spread that the Radicals were going to declare their opposition to the government; other rumors painted a different picture. In July the issue was settled when in an official statement, the Radicals gave their support to the government and advised all members of the party to aid it in any way possible.²⁹ The decision was not unanimous, but the moderate, right wing, pro-government Radicals were still in the majority. Alessandri attempted to persuade the Radicals to re-enter the government and the party was interesting in collaborating with him. The part, however, could not stand alone as it needed allies. The Liberals were natural friends of the Radicals because of similar views on the religious question. Talks were initiated with the Liberals, but they soon broke down. The Liberals, under Ladislao Errázuriz, had pledged themselves completely to the Conservatives and urged the Radicals to accept the Conservatives in any proposed pact. This the Radicals would not do. They informed Alessandri of the break in negotiations, saying they could enter the government only with parties doctrinally similar to their own.³⁰

The Radical reconciliation with Alessandri was not to last. Opposition to the government was widespread in the party. Several incidents marked the dissatisfaction. The Liberals in the Chamber had presented a memorandum condemning

²⁹El Mercurio, July 19, 1934, p. 1.

³⁰"Política," Hoy, III (June 29, 1934), 7-11.

"disruptive ideas" and attempts to overthrow republican regimes. The motion recognized the duty of the government to defend itself, and the Chamber pledged its aid to maintain authority. In the voting the motion passed 71 to 2, with 22 abstentions. Of the 55 Radicals in the Chamber, 8 voted for the motion.³¹ Secondly, in the Junta Central the leftist current renewed its efforts to reorient party policy. A manifesto was presented, signed by pro-government Junta members, that called on the Radicals to collaborate with the government for the reconstruction of the republic. The manifesto was signed by 12 members of the Junta, 7 of the Radical senators, and 11 of the deputies. Refusing to sign were 23 in the Junta, 6 of the senators, and 25 of the deputies.³² The moderates were dealt another defeat when returns from the Radical assemblies of the provinces, which voted on the manifesto, were reported. Out of 71 assemblies which reported, 50 rejected collaboration with the government and only 21 approved it.³³

In October the party expressed its feelings on the scheduled parade of the militia. The Junta Central declared that the parade would only provoke reaction and threaten public peace. Because of the typhus epidemic, running rampant

³¹"Política," Hoy, III (July 20, 1934), 13.

³²"El Partido Radical dividido por la minoría," Hoy, III (July 20, 1934), 16-17.

³³"Política," Hoy, III (July 27, 1934), 8.

throughout the country, people should not congregate, the Junta added. It declared that it would avoid participating in the concentration and parade.³⁴

A further indication of the division between the Radicals and the government was the announcement on October 30 in which the party delineated its future policy. The party was not exactly in opposition to Alessandri, but it felt that all action should be studied objectively and no carte blanche promise of aid should be given to the government.³⁵ A week later, however, the party declared itself in opposition to the government.³⁶

The Radicals and Alessandri had drifted apart partly because of fundamental differences in regard to policy. Certain members of the party felt that the government was not fulfilling its promises and was delaying important legislation, such as on education. At the same time, however, the leftist coalition was being formed and some radicals felt it would benefit the party to participate in this organization. On December 12, 1934, the leaders of the Radical party resigned. They had represented the moderates of the party and in the following election for new officers, they were repudiated by Pedro Aguirre Cerda's election as president. The

³⁴"Política," Hoy, III (October 12, 1934), 13-14.

³⁵El Mercurio, October 31, 1934, p. 3.

³⁶El Mercurio, November 8, 1934, p. 3.

drift of the Radicals toward the left had now gained full force.³⁷

The Republican Militia was never a serious issue for the party, for when the militia figured in political debate, the party was co-operating with the government and unlikely to criticize the organization. The May, 1934, episode was the exception, as the party did approve a vote censuring the militia. Due to provincial dissention over the censure the decision was not implemented by an attempt to outlaw the militia by an act of Congress. Because of the amorphous structure of the party, no clear-cut decision on such a controversial topic as the militia was possible.

The Leftist Parties

Under the heading of the left were grouped the parties termed *avanzada*: Socialist, Radical Socialist, Communist, and numerous smaller splinter parties. Their attitude toward the Republican Militia might be anticipated.

Alessandri had been elected in 1932 by a coalition of moderate and leftist parties. The honeymoon with the left was soon over, however, as the first cabinet disappointed it. The inclusion of a Conservative was an unpardonable act. The request for extraordinary powers proved to be the second blow which drove the leftist forces even further into the opposition.

³⁷El Mercurio, December 17, 1934, p. 21.

The first public appearance of the Republican Militia was the occasion for a denunciation of the government and its "fascistic militia." To counteract the militia's impressive parade, the representatives of the left petitioned the government for permission to parade forces opposed to the militia. The government, using its extraordinary powers, turned down the request, as it feared that public order would be disturbed.³⁸ Direct political reaction to the militia appeared in Congress when the leftist parties led a vain attempt to enact a measure which would outlaw the organization.

In May, 1934, the parties of the left saw their opportunity. On May 1 the home of Julio Schwarzenberg and the plants of El Mercurio and La Nación were visited by "terrorist bombers." While there was no direct evidence linking any of the avanzada parties to the events, the significance of May 1 was clear to the militia and to rightist groups. Besides, the Federación Izquierdista, a loose association of several of the leftist parties, publicly and vigorously advocated disbanding the militia. It was felt by some that perhaps these groups had decided to take matters into their own hands.³⁹

The Militia indicated who it blamed for the bombings by issuing its famous threat to a group of leftist politicians. After several days of silence the Left of Chile

³⁸El Mercurio, May 18, 1933, p. 9.

³⁹El Mercurio, May 3, 1934, p. 3.

responded to the "cowardly and anonymous provocation" of the militia. Quoting the oath of the militia members, the left called the threat a violation of its oath of honor. In the oath members swore to respect the Constitution and law, but in the threat the militia had said, "No political or judicial consideration will sway us from this resolution." The Estado Mayor of the militia, the left continued, had definitely placed the organization "at the margin of the law and of the Constitution, for it has superseded public power, and has committed a flagrant crime against the interior security of the state." The left announced it would not be intimidated by the threat and it reaffirmed its program of public well-being.⁴⁰ Signing the petition were a group of men, some named in the threat of the militia, others representatives of the avanzada position in politics.

At the same time the Left of Chile released a series of policy statements which the group would follow in the future. A national defense front against the "fascistic" militia, composed of all elements opposed to fascism, was formed. The Socialist party was declared incorporated into the defense front as was the deputy Juan Antonio Ríos.⁴¹

The parties of the left issued statements in accord with the opinions expressed by the Left of Chile. The

⁴⁰La Opinión, May 7, 1934, p. 1.

⁴¹Ibid.

Socialist party, in a lengthy release, termed the declaration of the militia a call for revolution, since the militia stated it would ignore constitutional processes. The militia, by its actions, finally confirmed the suspicions of the party. It was a "factional organization thirsty for power . . . it tries to seize the government without considering the means. . . ." Furthermore, the release continued, the Socialist party agreed to reject all "infamous slander" that tried to implicate members of the party in the bomb attempts, to reject the threat or any other issued in the future, and to invite all worker organizations to join the Front for the Defense of the republic in facing the "revolutionary fascist state."⁴²

Manuel Hidalgo, a Communist Senator, issued a statement on the situation and also used the opportunity to speak on other matters. At the end of his release he narrowed the topic to the militia. Communists, he remarked, were not interested in the chief of the militia or in the components of the militia as individuals. "It is our interest to explain to the workers the political and material significance of the existence of an organization, armed expressly for killing all movements defending the working masses, and to murder the mass of them"⁴³

The Radical Socialist party also aligned itself with

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

the avanzada forces, denouncing the action of the militia as an attempt to institute in Chile a reactionary dictatorship. It called on all sound opinion of the country to join with the National Front in order to solidify all groups who were opposed to the illegal action of the militia.⁴⁴ Similar action was taken by the Social Demócrata party.⁴⁵

Out of these series of manifestos came several recurrent themes. First of all, there was a unanimous call for disbanding the militia. Due to Alessandri's attitude toward the militia and due to the situation in Congress, implementation of the demand was highly unlikely. The best the parties could hope for was to arouse public opinion and to force either the executive or Congress into action. The second alternative was uniting the leftist parties into a solid front. The militia proved to be an issue upon which all agreed, and the formation of the Front for the Defense of the Republic was the result. Representatives of the center parties, who were opposed to the militia, were drawn toward this idea. On the evening of May 7 representatives of the Socialist party and the Radical Socialist party together with members of the Radical and Demócrata parties met.⁴⁶ The results of the meeting were not announced, but indications were that the parties reaffirmed their opposition to the militia. Further

⁴⁴La Opinión, May 8, 1934, p. 1.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 5.

comment of the left regarding the militia followed the same theme, and there was no shift in policy. From the beginning the left had drawn the battlelines.

It would be interesting to ponder whether the militia had any influence in the formation of the Chilean Popular Front. By the time negotiations for the alliance had started the militia ceased being a controversial issue. The problem of the militia, however, had been part of the reason for the estrangement of the Radicals from the government, driving them to seek allies among the leftist parties. To this degree, at least, the militia had a role in helping to form the Popular Front.⁴⁷ At the same time political alliances were not infrequent situations with the moderate or center parties being courted by the more extremist groups. The moderate parties usually were eager for working alliances. If the Radicals, for example, felt they could benefit by seeking the aid of the Conservatives they did, as in the Montero election of 1931. If they felt they could benefit by aid from the left they sought it, as during the waning days of the Socialist Republic. Feeling that the long range political situation was heading for a more leftist course could also have influenced the shift of the party. In any case the

⁴⁷The Popular Front in one of the few statements issued about the militia, had as one of its goals the dissolution of the organization. By the time the Front was well organized the militia was disbanded and no longer an issue. Two statements asking the dissolution of the militia were issued. "Politica," Hoy, V (April 15, 1936), 9. "Politica," Hoy, V (June 5, 1936), 8.

militia was exploited as an issue around which discontents could rally. As such the group influenced Chilean political history.

Fascism and the Militia

One of the earliest and most perplexing problems that the militia high command had to face was that of fascism. As elsewhere the left wing press called groups that did not share its views fascist or reactionary. Due to the growth of European fascism, however, the tag of fascism was not desirable, especially for a group allegedly nonpolitical. As a genuine Chilean fascist movement developed, it was vital for the high command of the militia to define its position.

The campaign of labeling the militia a fascist movement was forwarded by the magazine Liken. In October of 1932 the magazine headlined an article, "10,000 armed men to combat the people," which revealed that an armed, civilian, anti-militaristic group existed whose goal was presumably to stop military intervention in politics. But, the article continued, the organization was really a reactionary effort to support Montero. It predicted the complete absorption of the movement by authentic fascism.⁴⁸

In subsequent issues the magazine continued its campaign, accusing the government of aiding fascism because 2,500 men were transported on special trains to Lo Herrera,

⁴⁸"10,000 nombres armados para combatir al pueblo," Liken, I (October 15, 1932), 14-15.

and because Investigaciones, charged with discovering communist plots, had not been able to gather any information on the fascists. A half-drunk fascist, according to Wiken, declared that "we want the rotos to revolt so that we can sweep them with shots."⁴⁹

The October, 1932, manifesto of the militia was issued in answer to such accusations, although Wiken continued calling the militia fascistic. In December the campaign was renewed with increased vigor. Wiken began a series of articles which described the secret plans of the militia and disclosed the activities of the organization. Accusing the government of aiding the "40,000-man army," the magazine again called the organization reactionary and formed in opposition to Groves. The official activities of the members, it said, were spying on officers of the army, labor leaders, and leftist party leaders. The armaments of the militia, Wiken continued, were received from the government and its money from banks, churches, and other institutions concerned with preserving the unjust social conditions.⁵⁰

Wiken equated the militia with fascism. Its campaign, however, was challenged by Trabajo, the fascist newspaper. Trabajo denied that the militia was fascistic, as the goal of the militia was to defend political order and the

⁴⁹"El fascio prepara planes terrorista," Wiken, I (October 29, 1932), 6-7.

⁵⁰"El fascio, la fuerza armada mas poderosa del país," Wiken, I (December 10, 1932), 4-5.

existant society and was a physical force with no philosophy, while fascism was a spiritual force opposed to the present regime.⁵¹

Jorge Gonzalez Von Marees, the leader of the Nazis, analyzed the militia in a subsequent article. He refused to criticize the militia because the organization pledged itself to aid any democratically elected government and because it wanted to prevent subversion. These were admirable goals, he said. He also felt there was little danger of the militia mixing in politics as the organization was formed by men of a variety of political opinions. His only fear was that a faction of the organization might aid the right, since the majority of the members were from the upper classes, but, he concluded, the militia was not fascistic.⁵² Coming from the Nazi leaders, this was almost a condemnation of the militia.

With the fascist denial of the militia the sting of the left's campaign was deadened. If the platforms of the two groups were contrasted, there was little apparent similarity between fascism and the militia. In the first place, the fascists advocated a dictatorial order, while the militia favored democracy. The militia, therefore, was diametrically opposed to fascism and inimical to it.⁵³ Secondly, fascism

⁵¹Trabajo, April 20, 1933, p. 4.

⁵²Trabajo, May 11, 1933, p. 1.

⁵³"Las milicias en el Congreso," Zig-Zag, XXIX (May 19, 1933), 10.

had a so-called economic, moral, social, and political program. The militia had no such program and was dedicated merely to guarding republican institutions.⁵⁴

The militia alone remained silent, and its silence aroused the anxiety of the Nazis'. On May 16, 1933, Von Marées addressed a letter to the Commander of the EMG, Julio Schwarzenberg, in which he asked for a statement of the attitude of the militia in regard to fascism. On May 20 Schwarzenberg replied that the militia only opposed illegal changes of government. If the people chose another form of government, the militia would uphold the choice. "There is not, hence, nor can there be, opposition between the Republican Militia and the National Socialistic Movement that you lead. . . ."⁵⁵

With the militia declaring there was no incompatibility between the two organizations the problem for the public remained unanswered. The press began to call both organizations fascistic, as many members of the Nascistas were also militia members. Four months later Sánchez Errázuriz, Commander in Chief of the Militia, clarified the position of the militia in order to clear up misconceptions that plagued the public.⁵⁶ Previously, Von Marées had written to

⁵⁴Las Ultimas Noticias, May 12, 1933, p. 27.

⁵⁵"Milicia y naciismo," Boletín informativo de la Milicia Republicana, I (August 15, 1933), 5-6.

⁵⁶El Mercurio, September 10, 1933, p. 27.

Errázuriz asking if there was incompatibility between receiving orders from a Nazi commander and from a militia commander. Errázuriz replied positively, since the militia demanded absolute obedience from its members in order that its principles could be defended. At the same time Errázuriz had hoped no further correspondence was necessary. In the light of a new letter from Von Marées, he stated militia policy explicitly.

The insistence in your last letter of mentioning certain points of another order, certain publications in the press these last days, and the confusion that the public increasingly makes between the Republican Militia and the National Socialistic Movement, has obliged the Estado Mayor General to study once again the influence that this situation will have on the future of our institution and on the entire country.

I must declare that, considering the problem from these new points of view, the Estado Mayor General has become convinced that a militiaman cannot belong to the National Socialistic Movement.

Having replied to your questions, this puts an end to this exchange of letters.⁵⁷

The militia's announcement settled the debate conclusively. Men who were members of both the militia and the nazis were required to choose between the two organizations. Von Marées ordered all nazis to retire from the militia.⁵⁸ Those who disobeyed were expelled from the nazi movement.⁵⁹ The militia, at the same time, began to include the nazis in those groups which it would oppose, and Trabajo openly attacked the militia for the first time.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸La Opinión, September 10, 1933, p. 1.

⁵⁹Trabajo, October 5, 1933, p. 2.

The division between Chilean fascism and the militia widened as time passed, and became unbridgeable as the fascists increasingly followed Hitler. Acción chilena, a nazi magazine, remarking on the threat of the militia to the left, agreed that the militia's ideal was laudible, but that it had violated its oath. The right as well as the left should receive equal punishment, it declared.⁶⁰

Hoy, the voice of Ibañismo, seconded the fascist line as it compared fascism with the militia. Fascism was revolutionary, opposed to liberal democratic government, while the militia defended this form of government. Secondly, fascism promised "better" forms of social justice, while the militia was founded to maintain the traditional regime. Thirdly, fascism promised new forms of "democracy," while the militia stood for the old ideals. Fourthly, fascism had a definite program, while the militia had nothing. Finally, fascism was nationalistic, while the militia was formed mainly by foreigners.⁶¹

As the militia lessened its activities, the nazis turned to other matters. At times the issue of the militia was discussed, but this was only calculated to stir up adverse public comment against the government. During the political maneuverings prior to the election of 1938, the

⁶⁰ "El espectáculo político," Acción chilena, II (May 16, 1934), 124.

⁶¹ Hoy, III (May 25, 1934), 4-5.

nazis accused the militia of supporting the candidacy of Gustavo Ross to the presidency.⁶² The militia officially disavowed all political activity, however.

In any case the militia had clearly divorced itself from the fascistic camp. Only those who hated both the militia, and what it stood for, and the nazis as well, continued to equate the nazis and the militia.

⁶²Trabajo, July 26, 1935, p. 1.

CHAPTER XI

THE MILITIA AND CONGRESS

The political controversy that followed the first public appearance of the militia did not terminate entirely with the issuance of lengthy party manifestoes. Congress also became vitally concerned with the matter, due to the legal and political overtones attached to the problem. Congress was the arena where the parties tried to implement their proposals.

The concern of the legislators for investigating the militia was derived from several sources. First of all, there were legalistic considerations. According to the Constitution, for an example, only Congress had the power to establish the armed forces. Opponents of the militia, defining the organization as an armed body created to supersede the legally constituted forces, argued that it was unconstitutional as it had not received congressional sanction to organize. On the other hand, proponents stated that the militia was not unconstitutional as it was a private organization which complemented rather than superseded the armed forces. As it was clearly a private organization that violated no legal statutes, there was no justification for congressional censure.

Underlying the legalistic arguments were basic moralistic and political motives which also prompted the congressional investigation. Some congressmen felt that the militia was an ominous threat for the future, because there was no governmental control over the organization, while others felt the militia boded well rather than ill. Some congressmen used the issue of the militia to attack the government and the parties in opposition to their own, while others felt the militia was not a political issue and, as such, should remain above the debates of partisan politics.

Disregarding the barrage of arguments, one fact remained apparent. Government forces, at times silent, were in the majority; and any action contrary to the militia's interests was entirely unlikely unless the administration unexpectedly withdrew its support from the organization.

Chamber of Deputies

Mention of the militia in the Chamber of Deputies occurred as early as February, 1933, when the Socialist deputy, Humberto Casali, commented on rumors of the existence of a secret and armed organization. As the country was under the protection of the Constitution and guarded by regularly established armed forces, he believed there was no need for the existence of another armed group. Furthermore, he added, the rumors of the existence of this body disturbed public tranquility at a time when harmony was especially necessary. Ending his discourse, Casali presented a motion:

Considering that the Republican Militia is an

unconstitutional armed institution and therefore illegal . . . the Chamber agrees: to suggest to his Excellency the President of the republic the patriotic convenience that exists for its immediate dissolution in order to avoid in the future grave events that would have sad consequences for the country, and whose responsibility would fall upon the present constitutional government.¹

Uncontrolled discussion followed as the deputies attempted to gain the floor to speak at greater length on the subject of the militia and on Casali's motion. The deputies finally agreed to forego extended discussion and to vote on the motion at the end of the hour.

In the voting the motion was defeated 49 to 26, with 1 abstention.² The division, as might be expected, followed set party lines with the Conservatives, Liberals, and the majority of the Radicals opposing the motion and the Socialists, Demócratas, and Democráticos favoring it. A group of Radicals and independents joined the leftist parties in voting affirmatively, however, but the coalition was not large enough to pass the measure.

This debate, as later events disclosed, was only the preliminary round in the Chamber of Deputies. Further action on the part of the opposition, however, had to reckon with the ample majority the Republican Militia received in the balloting.

Debate did not commence in earnest until after the

¹Chile, Cámara de diputados, Boletín de sesiones extraordinarias, 1933, I (Santiago: Imprenta El Imparcial, 1933), 969-971.

²Ibid., p. 979.

first public appearance of the militia in May, 1933. The day following the parade, Carlos Vicuña, a maverick Social Republican deputy, inserted at the end of the session comments about the parade and the resignation of Noracio Hevia, Minister of Interior. Vicuña read Hevia's resignation message amid interruptions from the galleries and the floor. As there was only five minutes left in the session, sustained debate was not possible. The session deteriorated into a vocal free-for-all until it was adjourned.³

In the session of May 9, Rafael del Río, a member of the Liberal party, presented the feelings of the proponents of the militia. He portrayed the birth of the institution as a logical consequence of the "shamelessness" that had permeated Chilean life and that had reached alarming proportions. Telling the Chamber that he was a member of the militia, Río continued, saying that the militia was not a threat for the country but only would be a threat "for those who pretend in one way or another to dedicate themselves to the sport of overthrowing governments freely elected by the people." Speaking of the opposition, he remarked that the majority of the opponents of the militia was composed curiously of those men who were persecuted by the "military dictatorships." He chided the opposition for ignoring the true goals of the movement. Ending his speech, he fervently stated his personal feelings for the militia.

³Chile, Cámara de diputados, Boletín de sesiones extraordinarias, 1932-1933, II (Santiago: Imprenta de El Imparcial, 1933), 2560-2561.

Before ending, Señor President, I wish to say as a soldier of the Republican Militia and as a Chilean, a sincere lover of my country who understands what it is to comply religiously with her mandates and to respect the oath taken before her chiefs, I am profoundly convinced that in this form an effective sacrifice is being made to my country for whose prosperity and greatness I would happily give my life at any moment.⁴

Samuel Guzmán García, another Liberal party member, continued the discussion.

Guzmán García: The country knows that the Republican Militia is an institution of patriotism and of order, that it recognizes no other flag than the flag of the country. . . .

Zapata: (Communist) Ibáñez would say something similar.

Walker Larrain: (Conservative) If the Republican Militia had existed, Ibáñez would not have done all that he did. . . .

(Various deputies speak at the same time.)⁵

Guzmán García, the scheduled speaker, continued once again after the President of the Chamber called for order. "These men have united in order to defend the constituted powers and they are not a threat, but a powerful auxiliary for the armed forces. . . ." Zapata, interrupting the speaker, remarked, "In order to defend constituted powers! And to defend privileges!"⁶ On this note the proceedings for the day ended. Fully scheduled debate was slated for the following session in order to solve conclusively the issue of the militia.

⁴Ibid., p. 2604.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

In the session of May 12 Carlos Vicuña opened the debated by criticizing the President of the Chamber for remarking that he would not have allowed Vicuña to speak in the session of May 6 if he had known the subject of Vicuña's remarks. Vicuña felt the issue of the militia had to be debated openly and freely by the "reactionary bourgeoisie" and by the voices of men much more respectable who studied the problem from the basis of justice. Vicuña then launched into a portrayal of the militia, picturing it as the tool of the reactionary bourgeoisie to wage war on the proletariat. It, therefore, lost any claim it had to call itself either republican or democratic. Vicuña, ending his speech, developed probably the most telling argument used against the militia. He lamented the fact that public authorities had no control over the militia, only the control of the idealism of its members. "They have marched today, but who knows what may follow." Vicuña, in his words, ". . . to save the republic of such grave and eminent danger. . . ." proposed that the Chamber declare that the republican militia should be dissolved and its leaders prosecuted for sedition.⁷

After Vicuña had completed his remarks, the proponents took the offensive as a Conservative deputy, Enrique Canas Flores, spoke. Portraying those who attacked the organization as utopian idealists who saw the militia as a roadblock to their gaining the Moneda, he proceeded to validate the militia on a legal basis, saying that before the law it

⁷Ibid., pp. 2660-2662.

was perfectly legal. Delving first of all into the Constitution, he used article 71, which extended presidential authority to all matters dealing with the preservation of public order. Alessandri's statement, therefore, which promised government protection for the organization, was not an unconstitutional action.⁸ The Chilean Penal Code was also cited, as a document that did not specifically ban the existence of such an organization. Article 292 of the code stated that all associations formed with the object of committing crimes against social order, good customs, people or property, committed an offense by organizing. Since the goals of the militia did not violate this article, it was not illegal. Article 496, number 2 stated that all those who were able to lend their aid as an auxiliary in times of fire, flood, shipwreck, or other calamities, this being the key word, without grave personal detriment, and refused to do so, could be imprisoned. Canas Flores concluded that the militia was complying with a mandate of law and, at the same time, a superior command of conscience. Continuing his remarks, he gave his personal feelings toward the militia. He felt the militia represented a resurgence of the spirit of national sacrifice. In this role the militia was a tremendous educational force for the nation and could not be dissolved by any government truly interested in governing in accord with law and rights.⁹

⁸Opponents of the militia called Alessandri's statement unconstitutional because it gave legal authorization to an illegal armed force.

⁹Cámara de diputados, Extraordinarias, 1932-1933, III, 2663-2667.

Humberto Casali, speaking for the opposition, continued the debate and reviewed the formation of the militia and its principles. He respected all forces which worked within the Constitution, but, upon pondering the militia's oath, wondered about its true aims. By virtue of the oath the militiaman was sworn "to give my life if it were necessary, to impose . . .," impose being the key word, a specific form of government. Casali believed that with this oath the militia became political and unconstitutional, as it wished to give to the country a determined regime. Even if a person were to accept the legality of the militia, a special congressional sanction approving its existence would be required. This approval, however, would also mean the negation of the present armed forces.¹⁰

Armando Zuñiga, speaking for the Democrático party, continued the barrage, citing legal provisions which the militia violated. Article 22 of the Constitution stated that an armed public force was an obedient body and must not deliberate.¹¹ Interpreting article 292 of the Penal Code differently, he stated that the militia was sworn to fight those elements who wanted to better conditions, as it was composed of the upper classes. Hence, the militia violated this provision of the code by committing a crime against its "brothers." Concluding, Zuñiga warned, "If the Republican Militia

¹⁰Ibid., p. 2668.

¹¹Earlier he had criticized the men of the militia for being "automats," sworn to obey blindly their chief.

intends to march against the principles we sustain and defend, it ought to know in advance that its bayonets and rifles will have to be pointed first against the chest of Chilean democracy."¹²

Debate proceeded with increasing bitterness when Oscar Gajardo, Conservative and non-member of the militia, received permission to speak. As a non-militiaman he, first of all, expressed the hope that he could judge the militia objectively. He, as others of the deputies, began his address by attacking the opponents of the militia, portraying them as men who in the name of liberty attacked the organization, but who previously were willing to trample liberty and human dignity and now were working to establish tyranny. These men he pictured as capable only of negative politics, "call them Ibanistas, Grovistas, Dávilistas, or Communists." They possessed the knowledge of destroying power but not of creating. These professional revolutionists would be stopped by the militia, but it would not suppress their liberties as long as they worked by constitutional means. The country needed this chance for economic reconstruction, which was possible only with stability, and this was what the militia promised to give. Concluding, Gajardo sounded a warning for the militia, reminding it of its oath to respect the Constitution became if the organization strayed from its path,

¹²Camara de diputados, extraordinarias, 1932-1933, III, 2674-2677.

the support of public opinion would veer away from it.¹³

Carlos Martínez A., representative of Nueva Acción Pública, brought debate back to the opposition by expressing his intention of awakening the country to the danger that confronted it by the organization created principally with the money from foreign-owned banks. "This wide alliance of the three parties of the right of Chile, Conservatives, Liberals, and Radical Catholics, who form this militia, must be suspected by all men of free spirit of our country." According to Martínez, militia propaganda that stated the organization only opposed the minority oppression of the majority evidently meant that proposals to end the shameful conditions of the working class would not be allowed. The result of this organization, he believed, signified "a regime of coercion, terror, and violence in order to maintain the political dominance of capitalism."¹⁴

After Martínez finished, the Radical party's representative, Pedro Alfonso, rose to speak. The action of this party would be decisive since it had the largest single representation in Congress. Alfonso prefaced his remarks by reviewing the history of Chilean civilian restoration movements citing, first of all, the period from 1823 to 1831 in which there were 12 distinct governments. As a result the Civil Legions of Portales were formed and they helped to usher in the period of stability which gave Chile international

¹³Ibid., pp. 2682-2683.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 2684-2685.

recognition as an example of a successful South American democracy. Therefore, he concluded, and citing specific documents to prove his assertion, civilian militias had been formed in prior eras of Chilean history and had received aid from the government. The past eight years were comparable, he continued, to this earlier period of Chilean history but the country had had twenty distinct governments. The Republican Militia was, therefore, an agency born to combat this chaos and was approved by his party.¹⁵

Perhaps the most eloquent and reasonable speech given in opposition to the militia was delivered by Juan Antonio Ríos, Radical Independent and later President of the republic. He, first of all, called the militia political because of its announced goal of imposing "a system of republican democratic government." As far as Ríos was concerned, this was a political ideal. The militia, secondly, was not a democratic institution as it had no elected representatives who made its decisions. It did not discuss or vote on its actions and a member of the militia subjected himself to discipline with no chance to debate. Political agencies, Ríos continued, submitted themselves to constitutional methods in order to achieve their goals; in other words, they used intelligent persuasion. The Republican Militia's method for persuasion; on the other hand, was force of arms. The militia was, therefore, a negation of the democracy that it was sworn to defend. According to Ríos, the origins of the

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 2685-2688.

militia were easily explained. Due to the instability of the last years, the rightist parties, always the most disciplined, were able to consolidate their forces and to form this organization. With the economic strength of the wealthy classes to sustain the government, the existence of the militia was allowed. Ríos lamented the fact that the money spent on the militia was not spend on bread and work, hence eliminating agitation and instability. He also attacked the organization on legal grounds. Mevia, a lawyer, believed the militia unconstitutional and, as a result, lost his position in the cabinet. Alessanari, however, supported the militia as the Constitution did not specifically prohibit such groups. The May Day parade was not permitted due to the extraordinary powers of the government, but seven days later the militia was allowed to parade. This was not freedom but a recognition on the part of the government of force, no matter what the ideology of the group might be. The militia, therefore, was a representative of the time worn solution always postulated by big business, he concluded. "They believe that the best solution for the country is that which does not perturb the placid enjoyment of privilege that life has put in their lucky hands."¹⁶

As the hour for adjournment drew nearer, debate ended. Three motions were presented for consideration, but the motion that Vicuña presented was voted on first and was,

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 2698-2702.

therefore, the most decisive. Other motions presented by Andres Escobar, Communist, and Juan Antonio Ríos, also called for the dissolution of the militia, but that of Ríos' mentioned nothing of the prosecution of its leaders. During the voting many of the deputies made impromptu speeches explaining their decisions. The most concise was that of Zapata who voted for the motion because the militia was a horde. He was not allowed to finish as he had spoken earlier.

The results of the balloting on Vicuña's motion produced little surprise. Of the deputies present 67 voted no, 20 yes, and 3 abstained.¹⁷ The voting again generally followed party lines with Liberals, Conservatives, and Radicals composing the majority in opposition to the motion. Several changes, however, were apparent. The Radicals in Congress, by May, 1933, officially supported the militia as in the earlier vote of February, 1933, the party split, in some instances, over the issue. Several deputies, Oscar Chanks, Demócrata, and Luis Felipe Terrazas, Radical Socialist, for example, defied party discipline and opposed the motion. Chanks, as a result, was threatened with expulsion from his party. The leftist forces comprised the totality of the affirmative votes: Socialists, Democráticos, Demócratas, Radical Socialists, Communists, Independents, and members of the Nueva Acción Pública (NAP). Those who abstained were the President of the Chamber, Arturo Torres M., Democrático, who

¹⁷Ibid., p. 2719.

abstained because he was not allowed to explain his vote, and Enrique Aguirre P., a member of the Agrupación Grenial Em-leados de Chile.¹⁸ Voting on the other motions was an anti-climax and done in the economical form, meaning no explanatory speeches. Años' motion was defeated 53 to 17, and Escobar's lost 59 to 15.¹⁹

Formal debate had ended, therefore, with the defeat of these motions. The proponents of the militia did not introduce any motion into debate, but the intent and feeling of the deputies was apparent. The militia had been defined as a private organization by the action of the deputies with public opinion the major checkmate to its activities.

For the next two years the Republican Militia did not figure in the debates of the Chamber. Part of the reason was due to the fact that Congress was not in session during crucial periods when the militia happened to be in the public limelight such as in May, 1934, when the militia issued its famous threat to leftist politicians. Their comments appeared in the newspapers, but not in the congressional record.

While Congress was meeting in 1935, however, the militia announced its disbanding. The occasion was recognized in the Chamber with a speech by Arturo Gardewag V., commending the militia on its work and on the fulfillment of its promise of voluntarily disbanding when its existence was no longer

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 2723.

deemed necessary. "History does not remember a greater example of patriotism," he remarked. Ending his eulogy, he said, "Before these acts the entire nation realizes that the Republican Militia has served the republic and I from this bench feel honored to affirm that it has saved the nation."²⁰

Other deputies, while not expressing their doubts at this time, did not feel that the demobilization statements of the militia were going to be fulfilled. Later these feelings were announced in the Chamber. In August, 1935, Juan Antonio Ríos spoke and publicly accused the militia of not returning armaments, valued at 25 million pesos, given it by the government. He furthermore accused the militia of not dissolving as announced. The danger was increased, Ríos continued, because of the fact that these arms remained in the hands of private individuals. He called on the government to take energetic and immediate action to recover them.²¹

Debate concerning the militia was missing from the Chamber for another two years.²² In September, 1937, however, Justiniano Sotomayor announced that the supposedly dead Republican Militia was being reorganized under the name of the Legión Cívica de Chile. The new organization was a greater danger, he warned, as it was composed only of groups loyal to the government, hence lacking the national character of the

²⁰Chile, Cámara de diputados, Boletín de sesiones ordinarias, 1935, II (Santiago: Imprenta El Imparcial, 1935), 1762-1764.

²¹Ibid., p. 2280.

²²Passing references were made to the militia, but there was no sustained debate.

militia. Sotomayor read several circulars allegedly written by organizers of the new group. According to the circulars, the Civic Legion was formed at the time of the dissolution of the militia and of the School of Cadets and its members had been drawn from graduates of the school. Sotomayor elaborated on the new organization, using research he and other deputies had done. They had personally visited the headquarters of the organization, housed in a building which the government had put at the disposition of the Veterans of 1879, and were able to ascertain, from testimony of residents, that meetings of an armed body were held there. Continuing his expose, he accused the government of giving the organization 1,000 carbines for the 500 members of the Civic Legion, as of last August 27, and of creating the force to impose a determined caudillo on the country.²³

Ricardo A. Latcham continued the discussion by stating that the Director General of Carabineros had also given the organization arms. Latcham accused the organization of having as its goal the imposition of a determined presidential candidate.²⁴

Answering this debate, Emilio Bello Codesido, Minister of National Defense, sent a letter to the Chamber. In the document Bello Codesido flatly denied that his office had

²³Chile, Cámara de diputados, Boletín de sesiones ordinarias, 1937, III (Santiago: Imprenta El Imparcial, 1937), 3134-3141.

²⁴Ibid., p. 3141.

authorized deliveries of arms to any such organization.²⁵

This last flurry of excitement ended discussions of the militia or any similar group in the Chamber of Deputies.

Senate

Discussion in the Senate began at approximately the same time as in the Chamber and was conducted with equal intensity. The same basic questions underlay the debate; whether the militia was a legal organization, whether it was a threat to the constitutionally established armed forces, and whether it was a political instrument to be used by the government.

On May 9 Eugenio Matte, a Senator of Nueva Acción Pública, opened the discussion of the militia by questioning the need for such an organization. When the government was given extraordinary powers, Congress had been assured that the armed forces were faithfully complying with their duties and abstaining from any conspiracies. Matte, therefore, saw no need for the militia, but he added that any discussion of its legality was unfortunately useless since Alessandri had already declared its legality in his speech from the Moneda.²⁶

Continuing on the theme of legality, Pedro Leon Ugalde, Radical Independent, challenged the militia on the basis of article 44, section 9 of the Constitution which stated

²⁵Ibid., p. 3660.

²⁶Chile, Cámara de senadores, Boletín de sesiones extraordinarias, 1932-1933, II (Santiago: Imprenta El Imparcial, 1933), 1774.

that only by virtue of an act of Congress could the forces of land and sea be established, in peace or in war.²⁷

Matte again took the floor to attack the objectives of the militia. In his opinion the militia was not formed to defend order and the Constitution, but, on the contrary, was formed to defend established privilege and caste. The major aim of the militia was impeding the implantation of communism. Matte ridiculed this aspect of the militia's program since the communist threat was unorganized and weak.²⁸

Rafael Luis Gumucio, interrupting the speaker, reminded Matte that the true reason the militia was organized was because of the June 4, 1932, revolution. The militia was not only to combat communism, but to prevent revolution from occurring.²⁹

Debate deteriorated into a series of sharp exchanges between the senators. Matte minimized the danger that these revolutions would ever reoccur again.

Aquiles Concha: (Demócrata) For years brigades of doctors have been formed to combat bubonic plague. What would you say if these brigades would march in Santiago tomorrow after the danger of this disease has disappeared for such a long time?

Virgilio Morales: (Democrático) That there was much bubonic.

Guillermo Azócar: (Radical Socialist) Or many rats which propagated the epidemic.³⁰

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., p. 1775.

²⁹Ibid., p. 1776.

³⁰Ibid.

Interrupting the picturesque analogy, Tomas Cox Mendez, Conservative, interjected into the debate a speech delivered by a commander of the militia which, Cox hoped, would answer questions as to the true goals of the organization. The commander had said, "If tomorrow the majority whatever its tendency, wishes to implant socialism, for example, socialism it will be."³¹

Alejo Lira Infante, Conservative, continued the debate along this same line and read a speech of Sánchez Erázuriz in which the goals of the militia were stated. The important part of the message for Lira Infante was the statement "to impede the establishment of civilian or military tyranny." Because sufficiently strong institutions did not exist to impede these dictatorships, the militia was founded.³²

Matte belittled this rationalization, saying that popular will, while being partly superseded by military uprisings, had been principally subverted by bribes. All senators hastily denied any use of bribes in their political careers.³³

Returning to the topic under discussion, proponents of the militia called on Matte to cite specific instances wherein the militia had limited liberty or where it had appeared as a definite threat to anyone. Matte denied having

³¹Ibid., p. 1777.

³²Ibid., p. 1778.

³³Ibid.

said that the militia was limiting freedom. What he believed and what he had said was that the militia was a threat in limiting "advanced ideas" and a threat to the people.³⁴

Azócar, willing to cite specific examples, returned to the speech of the militia leader who had stated that whatever the majority willed, the militia was sworn to defend. This feeling, Azócar stated, was not universally held by the members of the organization. Citing an article that appeared in the magazine Zig-Zag, he reported that a high official of the militia had stated that the organization would combat all parties which accepted and recognized the class struggle. Proponents of the militia immediately asked for a specific citation. Azócar, promising to bring the information the following day, continued the discussion by remarking that the Radical, Demócrata, Socialist, and Radical-Socialist parties all recognized the class struggle and consequently would be opposed by the militia.³⁵

The following day Azócar brought the article in question to the Senate. Quoting from the article, he read, "Its enemies are and always will be the same: the parties that exploit the class struggle, and men who thrive on revolutions." Since this statement was not repudiated by the militia, Azócar believed it to be valid. Hernán Figueroa, Radical, asked for the name of the author of the article and

³⁴Ibid., p. 1779.

³⁵Ibid., p. 1780.

pointed out that Azócar had stated specifically that a high figure of the militia had been the author of the lines. Azócar, failing to produce the author's name, remarked that he had only supposed it to be from some high official, but since he could not prove it, asked for the high command of the militia to clarify the statement. Cox Mendez, believing a clarification unnecessary since the article had not stated what was ascribed to it, continued with the dissection of Azócar's previous statements by remarking that there was a difference between combating parties which recognized the class struggle and parties which profited from the class struggle. Curtly terminating further debate on this aspect of the subject, Azócar remarked, "That is a manner of Speaking."³⁶

Attacking the militia on a different point, Azócar again produced published statements of the organization. The militia had declared it would accept any orders from a constitutional government as long as the orders did not violate the law and the Constitution. This, in his opinion, was a serious statement, since the militia, as a force, was not a deliberative body. A military force, as defined by an unnamed distinguished constitutionalist, must be a machine obedient to the orders of the government. The militia, however, could not be so defined because it had stated that it would obey orders of the government only on its own terms. For Azócar the militia was nothing but an armed political

³⁶Ibid., pp. 1805-1806.

body. Today the militia was obedient, he warned, but who could say what would happen tomorrow.³⁷

Azócar then directed the debate to an examination of the affect the militia had produced in the country. The organization, according to Azócar, instead of fostering tranquility, had produced the reverse, proletariat unrest and social fragmentation. Coupled with these adverse effects were statements by government officials who assured the country that the armed forces were obeying their orders and posed no threat. "For this, I ask, what is the object, at this time, in bringing to public light this Republican Militia?"³⁸

Organized discussion once again collapsed as the senators shouted at one another regarding the action of certain of the senators urging the military governments. Alberto Cabero, President of the Senate, finally ruled further debate was not possible due to the tempers of the congressmen.

Azócar, attempting to calm the situation, called on his colleagues to forget the past and remember that everyone made mistakes, including the army. He believed in the message of the Minister of Defense which absolved the military from any suspicion of further attempts at subversion. To demonstrate governmental credence in its own official statement, Azócar called on Alessandri to permit the proletariat parade of May 21 remarking, "The passage of the popular

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid., p. 1808.

masses in front of the Moeeda before His Excellency the President of the republic should make him feel nostalgic for his beloved masses!"³⁹ With this pointed barb the session adjourned.

Fidel Segundo Estay, Demócrata, interjected a new theme into the discussion at the following session of May 11, that of racism and xenophobia. Estay recognized the right of the militia to meet, providing it did not violate the basic laws of the country and providing it did not become a threat for public peace. Diverging from the topic under debate, Estay seemed more interested in denouncing Alessandri than attacking the militia. He criticized the militia because he had seen foreigners in its ranks. Having watched the parade, he was amazed at the number of Turks and Jews who were members of the militia. Azócar, the master of the appropriate comment, remarked, "It will become necessary to hand ourselves over to Hitler."⁴⁰ Estay, not deterred, continued:

I wish to refer, Señor President, to the foreigners, to the Jews. . . . To foreigners we have handed over the nitrate beds, telephones, electric power, commerce, copper mines, iron mines. . . . Well, Señor President, we not only have handed over our material riches, but now we want to give them the future army of the republic, because I have no doubt that the Republican Militia will be the future army of Chile. . . .⁴¹

As other business was pending, Estay promised to continue the debate the following session.

³⁹Ibid., p. 1817.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 1836.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 1831-1836.

The May 16 session of the Senate featured Lstay as the introductory speaker. He continued his harangue and typified the majority of the militia as "Jews, foreigners, bankers, and public employees." The working class, therefore, could expect little. Lstay then turned to a discussion of the legal foundation for the militia. According to article 44, paragraph 10 of the Constitution, only Congress could permit the introduction of foreign troops onto the national territory, but Congress had not done that. Article 10, paragraph 4 stated that the police must regulate all meetings held in public places that were called without permission. The militia, however, was not regulated by the police.⁴² Lstay continued citing other articles of law which in his estimation nullified the legality of the militia.

When he had finished, the Secretary of the Senate announced that Senator Matte had introduced a motion. Matte's proposal was a simple statement that would affirm the Senate's confidence in the armed forces, and its disapproval of any other armed organization.⁴³ Applause from the gallery followed the reading of the motion.⁴⁴

No vote followed the presentation of the motion as some members of the Senate urged the body to consider other more important matters. As Rafael Lira stated, remarking on

⁴²Ibid., p. 1884.

⁴³Ibid., p. 1885.

⁴⁴Ibid.

the previous discussion, the militia needed no defense as the Chamber of Deputies and public opinion had already approved the organization.⁴⁵ Following his remarks, debate ended.

In the gathering of May 17 final action was taken, but not before further motions were introduced. The first was presented by Senator Figueroa.

The Honorable Senate declares:

Its confidence in the armed forces, army, navy, air force, carabineros, and police;

That, nevertheless, the inspiration that formed the Republican Militia is patriotic and this inspiration has enabled it to co-operate and collaborate with the mentioned forces in the defense of the constitutional order;

That, the Honorable Senate is certain this collaboration will be given loyally, will not compromise constitutional and legal order, and far from damaging the prestige of the armed forces, will raise the prestige of the corp;

That, consequently, the work of the Republican Militia represents a loyal and sincere union with the army, navy, air force, carabineros, and police, and an effective support for the realization of similar patriotic goals.⁴⁶

Senator Raul Puga, Demócrata, followed with a second motion condemning the militia. Senator Puga called on the Senate to declare that the militia should be dissolved, as it was an illegal and unconstitutional organization.⁴⁷

As in the Chamber, one motion was decisive, the others only reflecting the previous decision. Senator Matte's motion was defeated 21 voting no, 10 voting yes. Senator Puga's motion met a similar fate, being defeated 21 to 9.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 1925.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 1932.

Senator Figueroa's motion, openly supporting the militia, passed, 21 voting yes, 10 no.⁴⁸ The Senate, therefore, breaking the precedent established by the Chamber, took a definite stand when it approved Figueroa's motion.

Voting in the Senate followed party lines with Demócratas, Radical Socialists, Socialists, and Communists opposing the militia while Liberals, Conservatives, and Radicals aided it. There were no significant breaks in party discipline.

Discussion in the Senate did not end as abruptly as in the Chamber, even though the senatorial decision was much more decisive. Azócar, in the session of May 18, lamented the fact that the parade scheduled for May 21 was not to be allowed. It was only to be a manifestation of people who were not in agreement with the Republican Militia, he said.⁴⁹

In the session of May 24 Hugo Grove V., MRP, attacked the Chief of the Navy for issuing an order of the day that announced naval approval of the militia. Grove felt that the navy should not have given an opinion on the subject and he called on the Senate to voice its displeasure to the Minister of Defense.⁵⁰ Emilio Bello C. answered the query. The order was given, he stated, because of the patriotic spirit of the navy that felt the Republican Militia was an agency

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 1940.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 1917.

⁵⁰Chile, Cámara de senadores, Boletín de sesiones ordinarias, 1933, I (Santiago: Imprenta de El Imparcial, 1933), 80-82.

co-operating with it. Both were safeguards for constitutional order.⁵¹ Hence, in his capacity as Minister of National Defense, he could not condemn the action of the navy.

Mention of the militia vanished from the Senate for two years and reappeared only when the organization announced its demobilization. That was the occasion for an eulogistic memorial to the group given by Senator Hernán Figueroa Anguita. Terming the announced disbandment as "the purest civilian bequest that the present generation has been able to offer to the future," he proceeded to elaborate the results of the years of its "austere moderation and abnegation" for Chile. "Constitutional normalcy has returned to our country. The Republican Militia with its heroic example of sacrifice and homage to law and to the dignity of institutional life has rebuilt national civilian consciousness." Ending his speech, Figueroa called on Chileans to follow the example of the militia, sacrificing anew so that new horizons might be conquered.⁵²

According to Ricardo Donoso, it was apparent from the congressional debate that the opposition to the militia hoped to stir up resentment in the armed forces.⁵³ Donoso cited as an example of this conclusion a speech of Guillermo Azócar.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 259-260.

⁵²Chile, Cámara de senadores, Boletín de sesiones ordinarias, 1935, II (Santiago: Empresa Periodística El Imparcial, 1935), 971-972.

⁵³Ricardo Donoso, Alessandri, agitador y demoledor, II (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1954), 128.

During the debate of May 10 Azócar remarked, "We want order to be maintained by the constitutional army and not by the Republican Militia. Are there doubts about the attitude of the army?"⁵⁴ At this point Bonoso ended his citation, omitting more telling statements. Azócar continued, however, calling for either disbanding the armed forces, if as some believed they were political bodies, or for military reform. Azócar called the lack of incentive for military reform cowardly. "If there are caudillos in its ranks, they must be eliminated."⁵⁵ With the statements of the army's loyalty, Azócar wondered where the military conspirators were. He asked the Senate, "Now, señor President, . . . we must consider with how much sacrifice the army must take to resist the insinuations that are made. . . ." Gumucio exclaimed, "We do not suppose! We know there are conspirators who go looking for the aid of the army." Senator Puga indignantly remarked, "So you believe that some regiment is disloyal?"⁵⁶ The proponents did not name a specific case of disloyalty, as the consequences of openly branding some regiment as disloyal would have repercussion both in civilian and military circles.

During the voting on Figueroa's motion, Azócar again extolled the army by stating if the militia were controlled by the army, he would be the first to aid the group, but as

⁵⁴Camara de senadores, Extraordinarias, 1932-1933, II, 1814.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 1814-1815.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 1816.

he feared political manipulation would degenerate the ideals the militia now held, and with no effective control of the organization, he could not vote for the motion.⁵⁷

The issue of the Republican Militia in Congress officially ended with the decisive votes of May, 1933. It was unlikely that Congress would review its decision unless some drastic change in militia activity occurred.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 1934.

CHAPTER XII

DEMobilIZATION, DISSENSION, AND THE SOLUTION

The third anniversary of the militia was celebrated July 24, 1935, with a public gathering in Santiago's Municipal Theater. It was a time for reminiscing and of celebrating the three years of personal sacrifices of each of the members. All the high officers of the militia were present. A group of young boys from the school Caupolican paraded, and speeches were given by several dignitaries.¹ Little did the audience know, however, that this anniversary celebration was the last one for the organization.

Julio Schwarzenberg, Commander-in-Chief of the Militia, was the featured speaker. Sánchez Errázuriz had ended his speech after having reviewed the history of the militia. Schwarzenberg then mounted the platform. He began by saying that the institution could be proud of having complied with its duty in spite of the obstacles it had had to face. In Schwarzenberg's mind the militia ideal of institutional stability had been reached. Continuing his remarks, he said:

This miracle of political stability that we are beginning to enjoy having been realized, only on account of the existence of this school of the civilians . . . and in compliance with what our oath imposes on us, we will fold our tents, extinguish our

¹El Mercurio, July 25, 1935, p. 20.

camp fires and silence our patios, where before resounded the march of the batallions and the sound of the bugle. We will guard our bayonets, but inspired by the heroes and great citizens of history, . . . we will solidify the forces of our spirit and patriotism in order to face what our principles demand from us as indispensably complimentary to our labor as soldiers. . . ."

The work of the Militia was not completed, he added, as disruptive ideas still threatened the country. Before that threat all patriots had to organize in order to counteract these doctrines with other concepts basic for a stable social organization; Patria, home, work, civic consciousness, law, and duty. He reminded the gathering that force of arms was not enough to insure the future stability of the country. The future of the country was in the youth. They could spell greatness or danger, depending upon the education they received. As conscientious and responsible citizens, he proposed that the militia concentrate its interest and efforts in the School of Cadets Cuapolicán and train and educate the men of tomorrow.

Schwarzenberg continued by repeating more explicitly what he had hinted at earlier.

The mission of the Republican Militia completed . . . the solemn moment has arrived in which our rectitude, our civil consciousness and our duty as obedient and disciplined soldiers obliges us to proceed to the realization of the order that our last General Council and Estado Mayor General passed at the end of the last year, with the knowledge of events and circumstances that indicated that the essence of our oath had been complied with, that the disappearance of our militarized organization would accord greater benefits for the stability of the republic

²La Nación, July 25, 1935, p. 1.

than an indefinite maintenance of it, and that the present and future demands the demobilization of its armed units.³

He then ordered the demobilization under the terms of the Order of the Day No. 2. Concluding his talk, he told the members he was proud of what the organization had done. "Militiamen of Chile, the country observes and rests confidently in your promises, in your loyalty, and in your action; she has known you and she believes you. History, that impartial and cold judge . . . will judge you!"⁴

Demobilization became the official order for the militia, but this did not mean that the organization was disbanding. Demobilization signified that the militia would drop its military emphasis in order to enter into activity called civic re-education. The process had started with the issuance of the Order of the Day No. 2. Schwarzenberg had toured nearly all militia units in Chile, reviewing and observing the degree of readiness of each group. During an interview he had remarked that some groups had obtained a sufficient level of training so that repetitious training could be dispensed with. Some units, however, had not reached a satisfactory level of preparedness. Under the terms of Order of the Day No. 2 Schwarzenberg ordered units to classify their personnel and, at the same time, list the degree of training given to the unit. The classification

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

was to have been completed by July 24. The goal of the order was to have each unit 75 per cent effective and if, after the classification, the unit was found to be lacking, individual training was to be used in order to reach the desired level.⁵ According to the order, all units were to have had training in certain prescribed areas. Each individual, for example, was required to have studied the theory of the militia, military education, marching, and etiquette, combat education, target practice, and knowledge of arms. Group education for a squad was to include the execution of various drills, squad target practice, and a campaign problem. Militiamen who passed the review were given the title Militiamen of Action and were entitled to wear a horizontal green stripe on the left arm of their uniform.⁶

As it turned out, the classification was a preliminary step in demobilization. The actual process began with the review and demobilization of the Regiment Sargento Aldea on November 17, 1935. Demobilization was carried out by the Commander in Chief and other high officers. A final review was held and when the regiment was judged 75 per cent effective, it was demobilized.⁷

⁵"Orden del día No. 2," Boletín informativo de la Milicia Republicana, II (April 5, 1935), 2-4.

⁶Ibid.

⁷"Pasa revista de eficiencia el regimiento 'Sargento Aldea,'" Caupolicán--Órgano de la Escuela de Cadetes Caupolicán, III, No. 54 (November, 1935), 34. Hereafter called Caupolicán.

Soon after the issuance of Order of the Day No. 2 Schwarzenberg hinted that dissolution was to follow. During an interview he had stressed several points that, as later events verified, represented trends of thought of the high command. First of all, he called the existence of the militia a temporary fact, created because of "disgraceful circumstances." It was, therefore, an emergency force. Secondly, he stressed the civic re-education aspect of the labor of the militia, as military training had reached a satisfactory level. Thirdly, in reply to a question on any proposed dissolution of the militia, he replied that at all times the leaders were thinking of dissolution of the military character of the organization in compliance with the oath. The leaders, he added, did not feel the political situation was still settled, but when tranquility and security were re-established, the organization would proceed to disband as it had sworn to do.⁸

Some members of the militia, however, became alarmed over the situation. Schwarzenberg, in his message, had called the process demobilization, but to them it appeared dissolution. These doubts incubated for several months. With the demobilization scheduled to begin some men felt that the Commander in Chief should explicitly define the word. On September 30 a group of militia men met to discuss the situation.

⁸Luis Ytier, "El porvenir de la Milicia Republicana," Boletín informativo de la Milicia Republicana, II (April 20, 1935), 2-4.

In the opinion of these men uncertainty could not continue without producing demoralization in the ranks.⁹ At the meeting all the commanders of the regiments of Santiago, less one, were present besides several other members of the militia. As a result, a draft of a note was presented, approved, and signed by the assembled. The following day a commission of the group was received by Schwarzenberg, and the document was read to the commander.

The petition asked Schwarzenberg to give a "categorical clarification" of his July speech; in other words, demobilization or dissolution.¹⁰ The signees expressed their belief that no circumstance justified the dissolution of the militia, as reasons of public well-being demanded the maintenance and even perpetuation of the organization. For the dissentors the militia was not entirely an institution of emergency as citizens were not obligated to organize and stimulate civic virtues only during emergencies. Besides, the document continued, the present situation gave no evidence that the public environment had quieted as the leftist block and the recent manifesto of the Radical-Socialist party proclaimed the revolutionary ideal, which, if left unchecked, could destroy the democratic regime. The group recognized that the dedication of the militia members had declined, but

⁹Jorge de la Cuadra Poisson, La verdad de las incidencias milicianas (Santiago: La Nación, 1935), p. 4.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 26.

they blamed this on a natural tiring with repetitive military drills. The goals of the militia could be shifted, they proposed, stressing civic education, but maintaining the military organization. The petitioners ended their manifesto by soliciting the Commander-in-Chief's pledge of support for certain points. First, they asked for a public declaration, addressed to all militiamen, stating that demobilization did not mean dissolution. Secondly, they desired that the agreements that had been adopted by the General Council regarding demobilization be revoked. Thirdly, they asked that all agreements that had been adopted requiring members to turn in their weapons be repealed. Finally, they suggested that the orientation of militia activity be channeled into an organized campaign to stimulate civic virtues and elevate the national spirit.¹¹ Upon the completion of the reading of the petition, according to an eyewitness account, Schwarzenberg made "charges of insubordination formulated with nervous gestures and in a faltering voice."¹²

The following day the signees were summoned to the headquarters of the provincial commander. All were questioned as to the meaning of the note and all explained their actions, apparently satisfactorily, as they were asked to sign a statement of loyalty to the Commander-in-Chief. All agreed to do this and felt the matter was closed.

On October 3, however, the petitioners received the

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., p. 6.

Order of the Day No. 14 which stripped them of their regimental commands and put them all at the disposition of the Commander-in-Chief. The signees, feeling that they should institute some sort of action before they lost all of their militia privileges, decided to appeal to the highest tribunal of the organization, the Tribunal Civico. They hoped that the tribunal would declare that the EMG had violated its civic duties in agreeing to the dissolution of the militia.

Fernando Altamirano, editor of the disciplinary ordinances, unofficially remarked that the appeal was illegal as the dissolution of the militia was the exclusive right of the EMG. The petitioners rebuffed his observations by citing article 80 of the militia regulations which declared appeals were to be judged without indicating their nature or goal. Furthermore, they added, demobilization had been decreed by the General Council of the militia, an artificial creation of the EMG, and was therefore spurious. According to Cuadra, Altamirano recognized the fact and remarked that the accused, the high command, could not judge themselves.¹³

On October 4 a second blow fell upon the signees, as an order was released that stripped all of them of their ranks. For the signees this was another illegal act as any militia member who was stripped of his rank was given the right to a trial. An investigating committee was established

¹³Ibid., p. 8.

in the same order and the feeling was that the accused had already been declared guilty. Juan Esteban Montero was designated as chief of the committee, Marcial Mora was appointed his assistant, and Claudio Herrera, secretary.¹⁴

The signees, however, announced that they would not attend the committee hearings until their petition to the tribunal was judged. They based their refusal on article 80, section 2 of the regulations which relieved all claimees of their militia duties of obedience and discipline while their petitions were being judged. The committee agreed to the delay and transmitted the news to its superiors.¹⁵

With the internal dissention in the militia it was only a question of time until the newspapers heard of it. The militia had lived for three years with only a minimum of publicity and if now the story spread of a factional dispute in the organization, its reputation and prestige could be damaged at a time when mounting public pressure called for its dissolution. The news, nevertheless, leaked out and La Hora featured the story, adding that one of the points of the dispute was over the problem of returning armaments given to the organization by the government. The paper reported that the general staff was willing to return the arms, but that regimental commanders resisted the order.¹⁶ As the gift of

¹⁴Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁶La Hora, October 10, 1935, p. 1.

armaments to the militia was a political football, exploited by the opposition, it was evident that a solution to the rift was quickly needed.

Eulogio Sánchez E. stepped in to mediate the dispute. Newspapers continued to print accounts of the affair and the high command was anxious to solve the problem and inform the public. From the meeting with Sánchez E. emerged a new statement of loyalty, signed by all except Cuadra. All thought the matter was closed.¹⁷ A meeting was held with Schwarzenberg and the rift appeared to have vanished.

A press release of the Commander in Chief upset the momentary calm, however, and the dispute flared up once again. During all the negotiations between the petitioners and the high command, Montero and his committee had been investigating the incident. On October 10 he submitted his findings to the Commander in Chief. The opinion of the committee was that the petition was not a disloyal act and sanctions were deemed unnecessary. In fact, the document concluded, the men merited better treatment from the command of the militia.¹⁸ In the magazine Caupolicán, however, appeared a document also signed by Montero, dated October 19, but differing in its findings. The document did not mention anything about the petitioners meriting better treatment and in whole, presented the findings in a manner that did not conclusively establish

¹⁷de la Cuadra, p. 15.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 35.

the innocence of the men who were involved in the controversy.¹⁹

On October 23 a document was released, signed by Eduardo Guzmán Lcheverría and Antonio Ramirez Luco, two of the commanders of the militia, calculated to rectify the magazine Caupolicán and, at the same time, publicize the truth of the committee findings. According to the release, Ramirez went to Schwarzenberg upon publication of the Caupolicán document. Confronted with the two conflicting Montero reports, Schwarzenberg had admitted that on October 11 he had received the first report, "but that report repudiated the Estado Mayor and as the organization could not remain in that situation it had been obligated to disclose the fact to Montero."²⁰ The following day, October 19, Schwarzenberg had related the same story to Guzmán and had elaborated on the process he had used to persuade Montero to change the report. The same day the secretary of the committee, Claudrio Herrera, resigned his post because the document he had given to the Commander-in-Chief had been replaced by another, without his knowledge and without his signature.²¹

The release of the Ramirez-Guzmán document to the press only served to re-open the controversy. The Commander-in-Chief responded October 24 with Order of the day No. 16

¹⁹Ibid., p. 17.

²⁰El Imparcial, October 23, 1935, p. 7.

²¹Ibid.

which expelled from the militia the secretary of the committee, Guzmán, Ramirez, and Cuadra. Herrera was expelled because of "having failed in telling the truth to the Commander and before the committee," Guzmán and Ramirez for being "traitors to their oath and the militia ideal," and Cuadra for refusing to appear before the committee.²²

Expelling anyone from the militia was a serious punishment and due to the extenuating circumstances surrounding the incident, some expected a reaction against the methods of Schwarzenberg. Discipline remained firm, however, and members of the militia did not publicly object.

Claudio Herrera, however, addressed a letter to the press protesting his expulsion. He swore that the original Montero report was valid, a fact that Schwarzenberg neither denied nor affirmed. At all times, Herrera claimed, he had performed his duty as he was ordered. Part of the criticism against Herrera was based on the fact that he had given a draft of the original October 10 Montero report to interested parties, in other words, the accused. In this manner the information had leaked to the press and was printed by El Imparcial, October 17. Herrera said it was his duty to release findings to the accused and this was in no way an act of insubordination.²³

Jorge de la Cuadra also penned an open letter to Schwarzenberg in which he called the investigation nothing

²²de la Cuadra, p. 18.

²³El Imparcial, October 26, 1935, p. 26.

but a case of ignoring the truth and defining the culprits. In an attempt to stir up response in the militia he concluded his letter by saying:

You and your Estado Mayor General believe yourselves owners of the Republican Militia. As such, you have resolved to dissolve it. That is your right, but do not murder it. If you wish to bury it, do not submerge it in a well of mud.

If your state of mind was tranquil, so as to listen to advice, I would dare to give it. Get out, Doctor, from being the head of the militia. Return to the ranks with your Estado Mayor. I understand that this is painful for you and for them but it is necessary for the institution; it is necessary to cure it of its wounds.

Do not scourge the patience of the militiamen; do not wait until the lightning explodes over your head. Get out soon.²⁴

In the follow-up editorial in Caupolicán the opinion of the high command was again explicitly stated. The editorial outlined the process of demobilization, but reminded its readers that at the same time the Commander-in-Chief was urging the units to keep intact the principles and spirit that animated the militia. The magazine concluded by interpreting demobilization as only an abandonment of some militia activities in order to enter into others.²⁵

Even though demobilization did not officially mean dissolution, it could only be a matter of time before the organization vanished, barring some unexpected political upheaval. There were several reasons which foretold this. In the first place, abandonment of the military emphasis in the

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵"Resmovilización y no disintegración," Caupolicán, III, No. 55 (December, 1935), 1.

militia meant that the members' enthusiasm for the training was declining. Consequently, a shift to a program of civic education was announced. The new program, however, received even less interest from the members. Civic education was a highly nebulous concept and bordered on political indoctrination. The members had not enrolled in the militia to receive lessons in civics, but to defend the government. The militia lost, therefore, a part of its purpose. Secondly, political pressure, especially from the moderate groups, was increasing for the dissolution of the militia. Continued existence of the organization could only mean further fragmentation and haggling among the parties. With the apparent specter of a leftist alliance facing the moderates, the desire grew to remove one of the barriers barring a closer rapprochement with the left. Finally, there was a general feeling that the militia had accomplished its purpose. Relative political stability had been restored. Ironically enough, it was apparent that stability possibly could be maintained easier without the institution sworn to defend it. In the long run security and apathy were two implacable enemies the militia could not overcome.

At the same time, the government moved against all of groups of uniformed individuals that appeared in public places by decreeing that the carabineros had the duty to dissolve all such meetings. The decree was aimed at the Nazis and student organizations, but the militia could also be

classified as one of these groups which wore a distinctive uniform.²⁶

Dissolution, therefore, did not come as a surprise when in July, 1936, the order was given. Under the terms of the order the members were freed from all militia oaths and responsibilities, and were required to return all armaments that the "government deposited in our hands with a confidence that honored us."²⁷ Schwarzenberg, as commander-in-chief, admonished the militiamen to continue working for the principles that the organization had always maintained.

We will separate as soldiers, but our civilian responsibilities will increase. It is certain that the civic spirit and the accented love of country, inculcated in each citizen of the militia, will manifest itself in political action . . . into the ideological field that each of us enters. We hope that this school of civilian training is translated into an effective contribution to the purification of the political habits of the country, to whose service each ex-militiaman ought to put his best energies.²⁸

The announcement of dissolution provoked little comments as the militia had faded from the public spotlight after the demobilization order of July, 1935. Pro-militia newspapers devoted an editorial to the event and commented on the reasons which prompted the action. The order, however, explained why the militia was to be dissolved.

Its formation was justified in abnormal circumstances and the existence of this civil force could not nor should not be permanent. With the passage of

²⁶El Mercurio, November 7, 1935, p. 21.

²⁷La Nación, July 4, 1935, p. 11.

²⁸Ibid.

time fundamental institutions have been stabilized, the attempts to subvert order have weakened and failed, and respect for the Constitution and law have returned to be the basis of national life.²⁹

The militia leaders, the order continued, were convinced that the armed forces would not permit new assaults against constituted powers, thus making unnecessary the civil force that had co-operated with them in the work. Lastly, in view of the political situation, the parliamentary elections of March, 1937, the leaders felt that further existence of the militia could only mean division and increasing tension.³⁰

The Republican Militia had dissolved and only the details of the order were left to be completed. Letters between Schwarzenberg and Alessandri were exchanged which added a postscript to the story and answered several questions which had remained unanswered for three years. The first letter was addressed to Alessandri by Schwarzenberg, and notified him of the dissolution order.

To His Excellency the President of the republic, don Arturo Alessandri Palma.

Your Excellency: The General Council of the Republican Militia has agreed to the dissolution of our institution in view of the disappearance of the abnormal circumstances that justified its formation.

Consequently, I comply with the duty of putting to Your Excellency's knowledge that the armament confided to our institution is at the disposition of the government and awaits its orders.

I am certain that we, loyal to our oath, have not defrauded the elevated plans of the government, and I take this opportunity to thank Your Excellency for the confidence that you gave to the Republican Militia.³¹

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹El Mercurio, July 4, 1936, p. 13.

Alessandri replied the following day. He summed up compactly the thoughts of the citizens who had given their aid and support to the militia for four years.

Señor don Julio Schwarzenberg. My distinguished and esteemed friend:

I take this opportunity to reiterate to you and by your intermediary to all those who formed part of the Republican Militia my sincere gratitude for the patriotic form that, during four years, the organization has co-operated in the maintenance of order, based upon honored and loyal respect to the fundamental institutions of the republic.

Time, supreme judge and redresser of all injustices . . . will recognize the work of high and elevated patriotism realized by the Republican Militia that in difficult hours for the country put to her service great personal sacrifices and efforts, impelled only by a noble and sound ideal of public well-being, without egotism nor personal interests alien to the pursued ideal.

The confidence that was given to you was merited, because I did not see you deviate in any moment or circumstance from the patriotic oath that served you as an emblem and inspiration. With the discipline that you voluntarily imposed upon yourselves, you always maintained your ideals without asking for favors, and you gave a noble example of discipline and civic education that I will never forget. . . .

You are right to believe that the armed forces, defenders of honor and of national peace, are loyal bulwarks for the defense of order and of the fundamental institutions of the republic. After three years of my administration and with knowledge of the situation, I am able to assure you and guarantee to the country that the armed forces are complying and will comply with the sacred duties that the country demands of them. . . .

The order has been given so that the arms that were confided to you, and that today you voluntarily return, can be collected and returned to the authorities.

Reiterating my gratitude, I remain . . . Arturo Alessandri.³²

The dissolution of the militia in effect meant the end to the first phase of the Alessandri administration. The militia dissolved itself because there was nothing more for

³²La Hora, July 5, 1936, p. 5.

it to do.³³ This meant that Alessandri had the national situation firmly under control. Four years earlier, however, he could not have said that. In 1932 he had been elected president promising to restore order and rebuild the nation's economy. Many people believed that Alessandri would not last, and few believed that he would be able to turn over the presidency to a regularly elected successor in 1938. Alessandri, however, resolved to remain in the Moneda even though it meant his life.³⁴

A friend of his told him before the inauguration ceremonies in 1932, "Goodbye, Arturo, Government of six months." Alessandri, however, replied, "My friend, I will govern for six years, and you are going to come to see me relinquish the presidency." Later Alessandri remarked, "My prophecy came true in the first instance, but unfortunately not in the second, as my friend died."³⁵

Upon assuming the presidency Alessandri described the situation as that of a captain of a ship who was lost in a fog, not knowing which way to turn. He did not know if the military were loyal, if the politicians would aid him, or if the fickle public would support his policies, but onto the scene appeared the Republican Militia. He aided the militia,

³³Interview with Dr. Julio Schwarzenberg, former Commander-in-Chief of the Republican Militia, April 6, 1960.

³⁴Chile, Senado, Diario de sesiones. Legislatura extraordinaria, 1948-1949, I (Santiago: La Nación, 1949), 369.

³⁵Ibid.

in spite of the protests, because it was a force he felt was necessary. It, furthermore, unselfishly promised to aid the government. Alessandri, therefore, was given time to organize his program and to re-establish the discipline of the armed forces, knowing that a civilian group was prepared to defend his regime.³⁶ In this manner the militia aided the government. Whether the militia could have effectively prevented an attempted coup is an unanswered question since it was never called on to do so. As a latent force that remained in the background, it served as a warning to those who were dissatisfied with democratic government, and it discouraged them from attempting to oust the elected regime. At a crucial time in Chilean history, therefore, the militia appeared and contributed to the restoration of normalcy in Chilean political life.

Apart from serving as an important prop to the government, the militia movement also signified another thing for the country. Chileans have been described as natural rebels who oppose any man who represents the government.³⁷ They have been typified as people who give too much importance to politics and too little importance to the practical side of life. The instability of Chile was often blamed on this utopian and idealist trait of the national character.³⁸

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Leonidas Bravos Ríos, Lo que supo un auditor de guerra (Santiago: Editorial del Pacífico, 1955), p. 27.

³⁸Joaquín Edwards Bello, "Como es el chileno," La Nación, September 22, 1932, p. 3.

The militia, however, was an organization that provided an interesting exception to this generalized picture of the Chilean. It demanded obedience and self-denial from its members and they were required to give and not to receive. Furthermore, men from nearly all sectors of public opinion were willing to take the militia oath. In this manner the militia appeared as one of the few examples in Chilean history when the public buried personal differences in order to unite to preserve the nation's democratic traditions. The militia was, therefore, as the Chileans called it, a memorable ideal.

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August, 1960




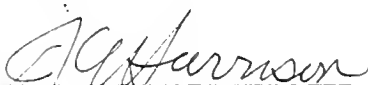
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